UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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| Investigation of: | |
| MINNEHAHA ACADEMY SCHOOL EXPLOSION<br>MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA<br>AUGUST 2, 2017 | Accident No.: DCA17MP007 |

Interview of: PAT BOLAND

Fire Station #21
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Monday,
August 7, 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)

SYLVIA SCHWARZ, Senior Engineer
Minnesota Office of Pipeline Safety

DANIEL BOWLES, Executive Director of Finance &
Operations
Minnehaha Academy

SHANE JONES, Area Manager
CenterPoint Energy

GREG PETERS, Esq.
Seaton, Peters & Revnew
(On behalf of Pat Boland)

I N D E X

P R O C E E D I N G S

(1:14 p.m.)

MR. EVANS: Good afternoon. Today is August 7th. It is now 1:14 p.m. My name is Roger Evans and I'm an investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board in Washington, D.C. We are at the Minnesota Fire Department Precinct 21 in -- excuse me -- Minneapolis Fire Department Precinct 21 in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

This interview is being conducted as part of the investigation into the Minnehaha Academy school blast accident that occurred on August 2nd, 2017. The case number for this NTSB case 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. Pat Boland, please -- excuse me -- you are permitted to have one other person present during the interview. This is a person of your choice: a friend, family member, or nobody at all.

Please state for the record the spelling of your name, your job title, and your company and tell us who you have selected to be present during this interview.

MR. BOLAND: My name is Pat Boland, B-o-l-a-n-d. I work for Master Mechanical, M-a-s-t-e-r, M-e-c-h-a-n-i-c-a-l, of Eagan, Minnesota. I'm a pipefitter out of Local 455. I want to -- I

[1] Corrected accident number

have been a journeyman for 16 years and plus -- it's been 16 years and plus.

MR. EVANS: And who have you chosen to represent you today?

MR. BOLAND: Dave.

MR. EVANS: And Dave, can you please spell your name and your -- the spelling of your practice?

MR. PETERS: Actually, Greg.

MR. BOLAND: Oh, sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

MR. PETERS: Greg Peters, G-r-e-g, P-e-t-e-r-s, with Seaton, Peters & Revnew. S-e-a-t-o-n, P-e-t-e-r-s, R-e-v-n-e-w.

MR. EVANS: Okay, thank you. I'd like to, then, go around the room and have each person introduce themselves with the spelling of their name and their affiliation.

MR. HOEPF: Hi, I'm Mike Hoepf. That's H-o-e-p-f, NTSB, Human Performance.

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

MS. SCHWARZ: Sylvia Schwarz, S-y-l-v-i-a, S-c-h-w-a-r-z, senior engineer with the Minnesota Office of Pipeline Safety.

MR. BOWLES: 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, Area Manager, CenterPoint Energy.

MR. EVANS: Thank you.

INTERVIEW OF PAT BOLAND

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. Thank you, Pat Boland, for agreeing to speak with us today. I really appreciate it. Before we begin, we'd like to kind of get a little bit more information about you.

We understand you're a Local 455 steamfitter/pipefitter -- steamfitter/pipefitter union member, and that your job is as a pipefitter for Master Mechanical, correct?

A. Correct.

Q. In Eagan, Minnesota. Can you give us a brief history of your pipefitting career, how long you've been in this business, and how long you've been at this particular company?

A. I have been with Master over 13 years, I think. Could be a little more. I don't know the exact date. I've been a -- I'm not actually sure. What, like, jobs I've done or what?

Q. No. What do you do for them mainly? Are you --

A. I'm a pipefitter.

Q. But are you in supervision or are you --

A. Yeah. No, I -- most of the stuff I do is, I run the manpower.

Q. Okay. So you're not on the tools that much anymore?

A. Not that much anymore.

Q. But do you still do pipefitting work when the time comes or do you fill in sometimes?

A. Yeah, I fill in if there's -- if there's time, but that's not

as much as it used to be, so --
Q. Are you a certified welder?
A. Yep. Well, you know, not anymore because I let those expire. Actually, the last certification I got was for a job in Polk, Iowa and that was the last certification I had.
Q. How long was that?
A. Maybe 5 years ago. It was for the -- oh, what's the name of the company? It was on the pipeline.
Q. Okay, that's okay. Four or 5 years ago you actually welded, right?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. So when you say that you manage people kind of thing, how many people do you manage?
A. Well, it varies. If we're slow, you know, and just -- our union works, and if there's no work, you lay people off and they go to the hall and you get another job. So people rotate in and out.
Q. Um-hum.
A. We've had, the last -- I think right now there's maybe 20, 21 fitters and maybe 10 plumbers working at Master. It could be one or two either way.
Q. Okay. And as far as the workload that you would have in the plumber/pipefitter arena, is the 21 and 10, is that a large or is that mediocre or have you had 100 or have you had --
A. Oh, no. No. This right here would be -- we have a school

going on, Garden City Elementary, that is -- we had to go to the hall for -- we had 14 guys there. Otherwise, you know, we're running probably 10 fitters.

Q. Okay.

A. But one job, we had a man out, so that's why we're a little high on people right now.

Q. And I know most shops like yours, they have, like, a core team, that you never get rid of that core team?

A. Yep.

Q. The core team at your place, how many people would that be?

A. There's probably 10 fitters and 6 plumbers.

Q. Okay.

A. I would have to write them down to --

Q. That's okay. So the way that you go by your work, do all of your people in the -- do they get all their training for like, let's say, safe work practice type things, like PPE concerns, lockout/tagout, is that all through your company or through the hall?

A. Through our company. We have a safety program at our company.

Q. Okay. And that safety company -- excuse me. That safety program at your company, is that a written program that is handed out to you or is it online?

A. I think it's online. Well, I mean, you can pull it up right on your phone, so it's online. And we have manuals on all the

jobs and we do have a safety day every single year that covers certain topics.

Q. Um-hum. So when you -- let's just say you were to go to the hall today and get five more people, like fitters. And they had never worked for you before.

A. Yeah.

Q. Describe for us what they would get in order to be qualified to work with --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- on your jobs.

A. So I'd place a call to the hall and I say that we need, let's just say two guys for a job. I tell them where the job is. They come in and I give -- we need a Social Security card, driver's license, cancelled check, and any of the certifications they have.

Q. Um-hum.

A. And the first thing they do is come in, they take a drug test. If they pass a drug test, then they go on to our safety guy, Jim Pond, G-i -- J-i-m, P-o-n-d. And they go through, you know, a safety training prior to going out on the first job.

Q. And that safety training, is that computer based or is that classroom based?

A. Well, it's classroom based. There might be some video in it. It goes over -- you know, it goes over everything, so --

Q. And then do they take a test online or do they take written tests, like a -- do they pass out a quiz or anything like that?

A. You know what, I think -- I don't think they take quizzes.
Q. Okay. That's all right. So once this person has been trained, how long is that training good for?
A. Oh, we recurrent every year.
Q. So is --
A. So, I mean, like our face mask stuff, every year we have to put a respirator on and blow into it. We have an annual safety meeting every single year. There's safety jobsite toolbox talks.
Q. Um-hum, okay. When you go on a jobsite, let's just say a brand new site, you've never been there before, go through what you would cover before you actually begin the work.
A. New construction? Old construction?
Q. Let's just say something similar to like the Garden City you were talking about.
A. So at this Garden City job, it's in a confined space, so we put everyone through a confined space training before that. We have monitors for the tunnels while people are in them. It's pretty tight corners, when stuff is going in there. And then I just look for the heights of ceilings to see -- we prefer people on lifts and ladders.

If we have a lot of roof work, the roof work is all coned off and, you know, we have tie-off points if you get too close, you know, if people are material handling going up on the roof.

Plus -- and then there's toolbox talks on the job. So if something does come up, we try to hit those topics.

Q. Okay. Let me go down the list and you tell me if I've missed anything. Do you practice fall protection?
A. Yep.
Q. Hearing protection?
A. Yep.
Q. Dehydration --
A. Yep.
Q. Okay. How about lockout/tagout?
A. Yep.
Q. Do you have your own lockout/tagout program?
A. No, but a lot of the game boxes have them in it. So I'm not sure with the program -- we do lockout/tagout.
Q. Well, let's just say you go someplace to do work and you have to practice lockout/tagout, do you use their program or do you use your program?
A. Ours.
Q. Okay. That's what I was wondering.
How about slip, trips, and falls, do you cover that?
A. Yeah. Yep.
Q. How about something to do with, you know, tool safety, electrical safety, like grounded circuits and stuff like that?
A. Oh, yeah, we -- everything that is not grounded is cut on a jobsite. Our ladders that you can't read the tags, so if you see it, you cut it in half and throw it in the dumpster. And it's kind of -- a lot of the companies do it.

Q. Okay. Do you feel as though that everyone that you hire these days and you bring them through, do you feel as though there's any sort of -- you know, kind of a tendency for some people to do the ignoring of the safety stuff or are you seeing that these days it's pretty good?
A. I'm not going to assume -- I can't answer for that.
Q. Okay. Well, let's put it this way. Have you had people on your jobs, you gave them the safety training, and they were doing an unsafe act, what is your action?
A. Our main things are, you know, you have to require hardhats at all times, safety glasses, and gloves. Anytime you're without those, you can be written up on the spot. We have a write-up program. So if you're -- so if you're not using your fall protection or if you aren't doing that and we're walking around, it's an automatic write-up and it goes from there.
Q. So, so many write-ups and you could lose your job, you go back to the hall?
A. Yep.
Q. Does that mean you're never going to pull that guy's name from the hall to work with you again?
A. That's not how the hall works. We take the next guy in line. And sometimes we send them right back, so --
Q. Oh, okay.
A. We get people for a day and we just send them back if they aren't going to work for us or -- I'm not going to drill a hanger;

I'm not going to do that kind of work. Well, you know, you come here to work, so -- and we're all pipefitters. We all do the same work.

Q. Right. Okay. So as far as the non-manual people that you deal with at your company, and you talked about Jim Pond, who's the safety guy, does he do safety surveillance on sites or does he just do --

A. Yeah. No, he walks through -- on sites. We have a safety guy -- I do not recall his name, but he does -- most of the stuff he does is, you know, we're -- we have a lot of people. You know, he can't hit every single little job we have because we have a lot of 1-day jobs, you have a lot of --

Q. Right. Okay. So generally speaking, let's say you're doing a job that's under $20,000. Would you expect Jim Pond to make a visit to that job?

A. No, not every one of them. No.

Q. Okay. But if it's a job like Garden City where you have --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- a lot of work with multiple pipefitters --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- you might see him how many times in a month?

A. You know what, I can't say for him. But, you know, I go out there, too. We have project managers go out there. And anytime anyone sees something, including a worker, that's unsafe, you have to report it. So everyone's kind of watching out for each other.

Q. Okay. You just said the word, the phrase project manager. When are project managers assigned to projects?
A. Say that again?
Q. When are project managers actually assigned to a project? How big of a job? Would it be 5 fitters, 10 fitters --
A. Oh.
Q. -- 2 fitters?
A. I have no idea how they do that.
Q. You don't?
A. I have no -- I absolutely have no idea how they do that.
Q. Is the project manager more of a paper kind of thing where this project manager's in the office and he has -- he's going to manage this job, this job, this job, this job? Is that how that kind of works?
A. You know what, I have no idea how they would do that. I don't -- you know, because we do design build. We do spec, plan spec. You know, and so I'm not sure how they get their jobs, and they'd be able to -- yeah, I don't even want to guess.
Q. Well, I was just going to -- trying to figure out, on a project like the school that exploded --
A. Yeah, yeah.
Q. -- would there have been a project manager assigned to that job?
A. You know what -- yeah, Nick has been my CenterPoint project manager that if I go out and -- Nick Corbett.

Q. How do you spell his name?
A. C-o-r-b-e-t-t. Nick, N-i-c-k.
Q. C-o-r-b-e-t-t?
A. Yeah, Corbett.
Q. Okay. And he's the project manager that you deal with?
A. Yeah, for this job. But there are other jobs going on, so you deal with other project managers on other stuff.
Q. When you take on a job, does the Master Mechanical people, do they do a work package for every job? Or does --
A. What does that mean?
Q. Like it shows what the scope of the work is, where the job is, who the contact people are, the schedule --
A. Not on these little ones, no.
Q. Not on the little ones?
A. No.
Q. They do that on larger ones?
A. Yeah, yeah. So a foreman would get the information like who his controls are, who's the insulator, who's -- you know, who will -- who's our people that we need for -- like, for a fitter, we need our control valve, so we would have a contact for the control valve. So that's kind of given to the foreman in the field.
Q. Okay.
A. And if we can't find that information out or we weren't given it on the job, you just call up the project manager and they give you that information or they call for you.

Q. So I want to go along the line of a different subject, okay, different subject altogether. What is your understanding of a pipefitter apprentice and what they can and cannot do when they're an apprentice versus a journeyman?
A. Apprentice can do just about anything a pipefitter can do if they can do it. I mean, that's how they learn. The journeyman is overlooking them. The apprentice's job is -- it's all on-the-job training, so you're -- if you're soldering, somebody's watching out to make sure you solder right. If you're standing on a ladder wrong, you know, somebody's supposed to -- you know, you watch out for them. That's kind of --
Q. Right. So as far as an apprentice, though, would you characterize that as, in your company and in your business, that an apprentice -- let's say a first-year apprentice, he's got 6 months in the apprenticeship program.
A. Yeah.
Q. Would that person be allowed to work independently without journeyman supervision?
A. Yeah, because you could say go run me 500 hangers going that way, so --
Q. Right.
A. You know what I mean? So you're aren't going to sit there and watch him do every one, but you make sure that he's comfortable and then you check in on him.
Q. Right. Are there certain tasks, though, as a -- like a 6-

month apprentice, that you would not give that apprentice to do?
A. Oh, sure. Anything they aren't comfortable doing that. I mean, if you -- if you watch them solder, I would never leave a guy solder without making sure that -- you know, you don't want to -- you know, it's -- you just want them to do the best they can and you want to give everyone a shot.
Q. At being successful?
A. Yeah. I mean, they're kind of like --
Q. So let's say you're hooking up a water heater and you're going to sweat copper joints all over the place --
A. Yeah.
Q. -- and the guy's got 6 months' experience, would you let that person do that job all the way and put all the pipe fittings, all the elbows and tees and all this in that system without having a journeyman supervising him?
A. Well, here's what you would do. You would probably have him do that if it's -- you know, if that's a day's job or half a day's job, you would probably have him do it. You'd put an air test on it, make sure it doesn't leak. And if it leaks, then you show him what he probably did wrong. Because you are -- I mean, you're trying to teach a guy --
Q. Right. Okay.
A. -- and you can't, you can't just not let him do it, you know.
Q. Right. Okay. I just wanted to get that --
A. Yeah.

Q. I want that to go on the record is all.
A. Oh, yeah.
Q. That's all.
A. Yeah, but you're constantly watching them.
Q. Yeah. So are there other classifications of people that you would use that are not in the category of an apprentice that could actually do work on the tools?
A. Like pre-apprentices or helpers?
Q. Yeah.
A. Yeah, yeah.
Q. And the helper-type status, what training do they get before they're allowed to go out with an apprentice -- I mean, with a journeyman?
A. What kind of training? They get the same training as everyone else did in the shop. Now, they aren't -- they can't do a whole lot of stuff. You know, they're there for hauling stuff, you know, if you need somebody to -- like, if you're --
Q. The gofer roles?
A. Yeah. Or, you know -- yeah, just -- yeah, the gofer roles or if you're -- you need a smoke watch, you need, you know --
Q. Right.
A. -- a fire watch, you just -- stuff like that, you know.
Q. Okay. So in your company, if you have someone who's not an apprentice and he comes in to work, you could take him on and he could be a summer student, perhaps a guy that's going to college.

A. Yeah.
Q. You can employ that person, but he's going to go through the same exact safety training as if you had taken a journeyman out of the hall; is that correct?
A. Yep.
Q. Okay. Okay, thanks. Now I want to know about any type of meeting you had at the school, who was there, what was said, what time was it, the day that it happened, and to the best of your recall, to the very first time you ever went to that school, Minnehaha.
A. Okay. I'm not sure of the date. I got a call from Al Ebel. I think it's E-b-e-l or a-l. He's the contact I have on this side of town with CenterPoint. He said he had a job to look at, at Minnehaha. And I met him out there. We kind of went over what was going on. They were going to put a meter set on the wall. And at that -- so when I met him out there, we were let in by -- oh, man; I can't remember his name -- a maintenance guy from Minnehaha.
Q. Don Dubois, perhaps?
A. I think he was there, but then there was another guy, too, with a balding head --
MR. BOWLES: This is Dan Bowles. Would that be Curt Bjorlin?
MR. BOLAND: It might be. He's got a nice smile --
MR. BOWLES: He would be, he would be Doug's boss, Doug (indiscernible) --

MR. BOLAND: Oh, no. I don't think he was the boss because he wanted to start at 5:30 and somebody -- they wanted him to start at 6. So I don't think he's the boss.

MR. BOWLES: How old was this fellow?

MR. BOLAND: He had kind of a grayish beard, bald head, smiled a lot.

MR. BOWLES: That sounds like Don Dubois.

MR. BOLAND: Oh, maybe it is.

MR. EVANS: Okay.

MR. BOLAND: That's -- all right.

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. Not very tall?

A. Yeah. Why couldn't he started at 5:30 then? He was saying somebody said he couldn't start at 5:30, so --

Q. All right. Okay, so that was a maintenance --

A. So that could be, that could be him. I mean, I --

Q. So let's go back. It was yourself --

A. Al, and I believe the one -- the first guy that this guy said. What was his name? Don.

Q. Don Dubois.

A. Yeah, I think -- yeah, he was -- yeah. So I think it was us three went down there. You know, he opened the door, we went down and we took a look. Yeah, we first sat out on the little patio area above the mechanical room. The meter set was going to go on that wall, to the north, and I suppose there was a 3- or 4-foot

area where this pad came past the building that was -- the mechanical room was underneath that. So it came out and we were going to be able to -- that was where we could core drill two new holes into the wall.

Q. Um-hum.

A. So we went downstairs and took a look and, mind you, this is just a quick look, getting a material -- because we don't have the job. You know, I'm just looking, I'm getting a material list and -- so I got what I thought we needed and looked kind of to see where we might go through the wall.

And then the other guy mentioned that quite a bit of water was coming in through the sleeve of the CenterPoint gas pipe. There wasn't gas coming in, but they had a flood in their mechanical room every time it rained. So that was around that core drill hole. He specifically mentioned it because he did not want us to put more holes in his wall that were going to leak. But we used Link-Seal on our lines and they don't leak. But I'm not sure what was there, but I do know that Al -- after it was mentioned a couple times, Al did take out his camera and he took pictures of that. So I do know that, so --

Q. Okay. And when you walked through the -- can you, perhaps, tell us what was talked about and who was talking and what was said?

A. I just did my material list and --

Q. Were there any instructions as far as where you could tie in

and if you were going to isolate valves or you're going to cut the gas off from this to that? Was all of that stuff talked about?
A. Well, we tie in on the customer side of the piping, and that's -- so I take the measurements from there, and that's kind of where we went from.
Q. And when you say on the customer's side of the piping, what part of that room was -- where you were going to start from, where was that?
A. Okay. We were starting on where I said that wall, where it goes down.
Q. Um-hum.
A. That would be our initial penetration, through that wall. And then they had a firm gas meter, an interruptible meter, and we would tie into the firm gas. You know, I believe there was a union and three valves. You know, they had three valves coming off going after their meter and then the one going into it. So we would tie in right after that meter, right before all their shutoff valves.
Q. Can we have you look at this -- these photographs and give us an idea where you're talking about? This is from the Exhibit 4 from an earlier interview, and let us know if this view includes what you're speaking of.
A. Let's see here.
Q. And you're welcome to page through those pictures if you see a better view.

A. Yeah, so this is standing right in the doorway looking that way. So that's the firm gas, the one right there. Yeah, my tie-in point was going to be right there. When I first looked at it, I was going to do it right there, put a valve in. First valve in the room, you know, you valve it off, and then all these had their own valves on so they could separate them later on.

MR. PIERZINA: Just so you know, the person -- this is Brian Pierzina. If you point to some -- say what you're pointing at so the --

MR. BOLAND: I'm pointing, there's a union right here.

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. Let me call this Exhibit 5. So on Exhibit 5, there is a pipe that's tied in with copper in the lower horizontal piece near a blue bucket, is where the tie-in for the meter was going to be, correct?

A. Yep.

Q. Okay. I'm going to put an X. So that tie-in was here.

A. Yep.

Q. And then mark that area with an X. Okay.

A. Yeah, it's kind of a -- it seems like the room was more closed in than that. I can't really --

Q. At the firm meter?

A. What?

Q. And what was the one for the firm meter? The tie-in at the firm meter?

A. Outside.
Q. The one, the existing?
A. The one that I was just on right there, that was the firm meter.
Q. Oh, okay. Okay. Thank you. The one we were just looking at where we -- Exhibit 5, that was the firm meter?
A. Yes. That was the firm meter.
Q. Okay, good. Thank you.
A. Yeah. And then we were tying in on -- well, I'm calling it the boiler one. I would assume that that's interruptible. I'm not even going to say that because I -- but I'm assuming, that tie-in on the one that was the boiler. Yeah, I can't even -- maybe I shouldn't even have clarified that that's a firm meter, but that's what -- that's so the gas doesn't get shut off, so --
Q. Right.
A. All right. I'm just trying to -- for some reason, I thought this was in the middle of the room more, but -- yeah, so -- you sure this is that room?
Q. Yeah, I'm pretty sure. Yeah.
A. Because there was a cord running through the wall right there. My initial -- when I first went in there looking, I was going to put the holes down here, on that day we were there, but there was a cable on the wall going right here that we were going to squeeze in through here, instead. But there was a cable on the wall.

Q. There are some more photographs you can look through. So you're not seeing what you're looking for on these?
A. No. There was something on the wall right here because we were going to have to -- from the school, that's what I'm remembering.

And that was -- this isn't even part of the initial meeting. Because I just went in, I didn't even -- to be honest, I didn't even look at this that closely. When we first went in, we were -- I went through, made a material list. We don't have this job. I just made a material list. I knew we were going to have to do two core drill holes, we were going to tie in at each of the meters, and then I went back to the shop and gave Nick the material list.
Q. Okay.
A. I'm getting into more of this past week then. Because that's when we looked more at it.
Q. Okay. So when you had the discussions about where the pipe was going to go and where the tie-ins were going to go and all of that, was there ever any talk about on the far side of a valve that was going to be closed on a live gas line, that they would tie -- they'd put a blind flange on?
A. Say that again?
Q. On this particular valve right here, was there ever -- and see this, if this valve were closed and you had this flange here --
A. Yeah.

Q. -- was there talk that there was going to be a blind flange placed on this valve?
A. No. And, see, what's odd to me is this is -- we were tying into this line over here, coming off this meter right here. We were going to come across and tie in right up here.
Q. Where's that? Oh, on this one right here?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay, yeah. We had -- we had heard that earlier.
A. So as you're looking at that, maybe if we have it, you can see on that page that there isn't a valve there. So maybe that day they were going to that valve to shut it off, then, because I don't see a valve on that site.
Q. So did you talk about -- I mean, you didn't -- I guess this is the line, right?
A. What?
Q. That's the line, right?
A. Yeah.
Q. That they were going to tie into --
A. Yeah.
Q. -- to go outside?
A. No. Oh, yeah. Yeah. No. This line -- yeah, our line from outside is going here, then this one went into their mechanical room.
Q. Okay, yeah. So in making that tie-in, did they talk about any valves they were going to close to do that, or were they

talking about the system being completely down in order to do that? And completely squeezed off at the road or at the --

A. Oh, no, no, no. No, usually we would just shut the valve off and plug into our tie-in. And so we would -- so if there is a valve up here and you're able to shut this meter off, then you would -- for sure, you would blind flange it or put a plug in it or whatever we've done in the past. You know, you just don't leave it open. So yeah, you would for sure have the valve shut and then you would put a blind flange on. If it was a flange or if it was a plug or a cap, whatever, you would never leave that one open.

Q. Right. But what you're talking about is an existing valve inside the room was going to be closed, correct?

A. Yep.

Q. Once that was closed, you'd make -- you'd get the dead side of that, put a blind flange on it --

A. Yep.

Q. -- button it up, torque it up with a gasket and all that stuff.

A. Yeah.

Q. And then that would allow you to work downstream?

A. Yeah, so you could tie -- get the tie-in done so we could get it done on time. Yep.

Q. Okay. And then you would later take the blind flange out, put another flange on it and hook it back up?

A. No, that's a dead line. We're going to a new --
Q. Well, (indiscernible) --
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay.
A. Yeah, that would be all -- never used again.
Q. That's demoed?
A. Yep.
Q. Demoed. Okay.
A. Yep, they were running new service this -- it was supposed to be this week. And we just had to be done by, you know, Friday of last week, so --

Yep. And I don't know what day they were going to do the tie-in, but what we do is we tie in -- that's a lot of work for us to get all that welded pipe tied in to their stuff. So we've always done the bulk of the work first and then the shutdown, they -- CenterPoint comes in, whether they pinch it off or whatever they're doing; whether they're shutting one valve off there or redoing it. But a lot of times we've done it where we double-valve something, go into the new meter and the old meter. You shut the one off the old meter and you turn on the one on the new meter, and then nobody loses service. So we try to take care that nothing is shut down for very long.

Q. Okay.
A. And other ones that you don't do that. You know, you pipe through something first.

Now this one, that day of, we would've had our 2-inch into this -- into the room. We would've been done on that meter outside and we would just have a 2-inch already into the room to tie in this one.

Q. Okay.

A. The other one would've already been tied in and complete.

Q. Okay.

A. And there'd be no gas on that meter set, if I assume that that was the picture I saw --

Q. It's this. This is the new meter set.

A. Yeah, that. So there'd be no gas on that till this week.

Q. Yeah. So when you were going through that walkthrough, did you get any input from Alan Ebel at all with regard to how --

A. No, I just asked who his -- who the project manager is, and we kind of go over the scenario where, you know, what -- we can tie in here, we can tie in here. You know, we kind of go -- you know, we're just talking, just figuring out the job, and then --

Q. When all that was going on, did you get any comments or resistance or this is a better way to do it or why would you do it that way --

A. No, because --

Q. -- from Alan?

A. No. No, because we've done this -- literally, I bet you we've done a hundred of them. I mean, we've done a lot of these and --

Q. Okay. And I guess you've done a lot of work with CenterPoint before, right?
A. Yeah, that's what I'm saying, we've done -- I bet you our company has done over a hundred of them.
Q. A hundred.
A. That's not -- and I bet you we've done 10, 15, 20 this year, too. We've done quite a few this year. I was actually at another CenterPoint job the day of this in a central middle school, and then we had -- and I looked at two more on Monday. You know, it's --
Q. Okay.
A. We've given -- I mean, we've done a lot of them.
Q. Okay. Let's go forward a little bit. So once the piping has been installed -- first off, who does the permit? Do you folks get the permit?
A. Yep.
Q. And where does that permit come from?
A. If that's Minneapolis, it came from the Minneapolis --
Q. City of Minneapolis?
A. Yeah, yeah.
Q. Okay. Once that permit's been issued, what are your obligations once you have that permit in hand?
A. So once we would begin work, we would -- if we have welded pipe in the dirt, we call the inspector to have him sign off on it because we have to -- you know, it's welded. It's --

Q. Right.
A. We have to make sure that we have the mastic and tape on it, and then they like seeing all of that stuff, so --
Q. Okay.
A. So what would happen is Steve would get that piece of pipe done, the welded stuff that's going in the dirt. He would've called the inspector to come over. He would have an air test on both sides before we put it through the -- before we put it in the ground.
Q. Um-hum.
A. Then if he stuck around, then we would paint and tape it at that time, and then we'd put it through the hole and we'd Link-Seal the hole and --
Q. Okay. So as far as the inspector's concerned, those are like hold points for you?
A. Those are what?
Q. Hold points.
A. Yep.
Q. That you can't go further until you get that part done?
A. Yep. And sometimes -- and all you have to do sometimes is ask and if they say yes, you can do the weld in the ground, then you'd do the weld and then you call them up and they want to -- a lot of times they just want to see the air test to make the -- that it held. But there's, you know, there's always a test on them that they have to sign off on before we --

Q. Who keeps the paperwork for the test results? Is that back to the city?
A. I would think that's city.
Q. I mean, you sign something off and give it to the city guy --
A. No.
Q. -- or the city inspector?
A. No. You would have an air test on it and the city guy comes and verifies it.
Q. He just looks at it and says it held and --
A. Yep.
Q. -- I'm good to go?
A. Yep. So whether the -- and I'm not -- yeah, that's usually what happens. Sometimes it's an overnight one; sometimes it's a 30-minute one; sometimes it's -- you know, depending upon the pressure you put on it, it's -- I mean, it's different. And some ask for more, some ask for less. You just ask what they want.
Q. How about the closure bolt-up? You know, when you're going to close up a system and bolt it up, do you have to torque the bolts and have to --
A. Yep.
Q. And does it all -- does that have to be witnessed and certified and --
A. We have never had that done before.
Q. Yeah. So does the inspector buy that off, as well?
A. Yeah.

Q. The bolt-up?
A. Yep.
Q. He does? And when that inspector buys that, is that from the -- a leak test, and do you do soap or a sniff or how do you do that?
A. Well, we sniff, we soap, we have it all. So it's mostly we put an air test on them.
Q. Okay.
A. And then once that final connection's done that day of, that's all soap-bubbled. And it's not only soap-bubbled by us, but it's usually soap-bubbled by CenterPoint.
Q. Okay. Does CenterPoint ask to see copies of the sign-offs that the inspector has looked at?
A. I don't know if they call the city for that or not. I'm not sure. They've never asked me for one.
Q. So in all the work you've done with CenterPoint, you've never been asked by CenterPoint to show me the results of the inspection?
A. No. And mind you, I'm -- I used to do these and I'm not the one working on these anymore. I'm going around looking. I'm not --
Q. Yeah.
A. -- the physical guy talking to an inspector anymore. I'm not the --
Q. Right.

A. I run down sometimes and get the permits, but I'm not the one dealing the day-to-day stuff with those inspectors.
Q. What kind of information do you have to have when you go and get a permit from the city?
A. You know what, I'm not the one who fills those out.
Q. Okay. But you've gone down there before?
A. I've gone down there before, but I'm not the one who fills in that permit. And you know what, I don't read them. I just -- I bring them down there to get it because these are "day of" jobs. Sometimes they call and they need something done the next day or they do that, but we have to get a permit in the process going. And in Minneapolis, you can go down there and you can get a permit the day of if you're working on it.
Q. Okay. So have you had occasion when an inspector didn't buy off?
A. I'm sure there's been -- I can't -- I'm not going to guess.
Q. I mean with you.
A. No not --
Q. Not with you?
A. Oh, no.
Q. In all of your history of doing work like that, you never had an inspector not buy off?
A. I'm letting you know, I have -- so if we started these 5 years ago, I might've been doing them the first year. I have not -- I've been now in charge of --

Q. Of crews, so --
A. Yeah, I'm more -- I don't want to say I'm a project manager, but I'm doing other stuff. But when they call, I run out and get a material list.
Q. Right.
A. So I'm not a -- yeah.
Q. Okay. You coordinate more than you do --
A. Yeah, yeah. That's exactly it. I'm --
Q. Yeah. Your job, I'm sure, is much more important than the tools, just to get everything so the job runs smooth when they start.

So whenever the CenterPoint people decide to say, okay, we're going to do the tie-in and we're going to put the gas into the building, are you folks there when that happens?
A. Yep.
Q. Are you always there?
A. Not every time because sometimes we're already done. You know, we you double valve something off, we've done that, and then they'll close it off and put a plug in the -- you know, in the valve. Because we put a tee in, there'd be a valve both ways. Sometimes we just walk away. They put a plug in the bottom one or --
Q. Uh-huh. Okay. But you have been there and you have --
A. Oh, yeah, many times. Many times they're pinching it off and we have a tie-in and they need gas back on that day. We've had it

where, you know, a business closes down on a Saturday, we're there all day long with CenterPoint side by side. We're helping them move their meters out of the way because they have meter's right where our pipe has to go. You know, they might help us lug something in. You know, it's --

Q. Okay. As far as the work, let's say whenever your folks are doing the scope of work, like cutting, welding, wrapping pipe, all this, do you see a CenterPoint person?

A. Yeah, sometimes. Like, we were down just this -- it might've even been last year -- right down off of Hennepin Avenue in the middle of the night, during some shutdown they had. They were running new gas lines. We were running all the vent lines. They were side by side with us in the dirt. They're putting that -- they're putting whatever that magnesium thing is to the -- you know, grounding the -- or the lines we're doing, it's -- I mean, we're -- there's a lot of side-by-side stuff.

Q. Okay.

A. And then there's stuff that isn't.

Q. Okay. So it's unusual for you to run a complete customer piping job, 3-inch, 4-inch in diameter, and never see CenterPoint?

A. Oh. I would think sometime in each of those we would see somebody. I mean, somebody's digging a hole outside, somebody's -- I mean, there's always -- you know, in some process of this there's always -- you know, if we're doing that stuff, somebody dug the hole, somebody -- we're there working. We were just there

-- I mean, we did a couple there side by side while meters were set up. There's a hole there that CenterPoint dug for us, they're out in the streets, we're --

Q. Um-hum.

A. I mean, it's --

Q. I guess what I'm wondering, though, does CenterPoint ever come along and say, hey, where's your safety glasses? Where's your hard hat? How come you haven't tied that ladder off? All those types of things, the safety related things, do you ever get, you know, a discipline, I guess the word is or --

A. No.

Q. -- infraction against you from CenterPoint? Have you ever had that happen?

A. No.

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

MR. BOLAND: [redacted] --

MR. EVANS: Yeah. We'll go off the record.

(Off the record.)

(On the record.)

MR. EVANS: We're off the record for the Pat Boland interview.

(Off the record.)

(On the record.)

MR. EVANS: Back on the record with the Pat Boland interview.

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. So along the way, it sounds -- just in my own opinion; I've been around this stuff a long time -- that your work, when you get out there on the job to do the customer piping, is kind of like your own show, not so much involved with a -- any of the other -- you know, the clients you're doing the work for?

A. Oh, no. The clients we do work for have a say because they might not want us going in the front of the building. We might -- you know, we've had to cross a roof because they didn't want the meters set out in front, you know. So we've had -- in times past, the customer does have a say, if they don't want it there, then we have to think of a different --

Q. Right. Yeah, I understand that, as far as the routing. But once the routing has been established, the customer pretty much leaves you alone to do your work?

A. Yeah, because they -- yeah.

Q. You've done a lot of work before in the past --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- right? You know, I've -- I have a brother who's a journeyman pipefitter, served in the trades forever. And he used to always tell me, you know, he'd say things like, gosh, this week I'm doing work for this guy, this company, and I hate doing work for them, [redacted] --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- [redacted] Do you have companies that you do this type of work with, you know -- maybe

not this, not exactly this gas-type thing, but, I mean, when you do work for these companies all the time, that they -- they're a bit more involved in your work every day than what CenterPoint is?
A. I'm not -- sure. Like, you know, at Garden City and there's a supe on the job looking it over. I'm not actually sure where you're going with that. So --
Q. Yeah. No, I mean, like let's just say Garden City. Who are you doing that work, who's your -- who hired you for that?
A. I think Ebert is running that job.
Q. But who hired the -- I mean, who's the -- who is the CenterPoint for that job?
A. CenterPoint, nobody.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's a new construction --
MR. BOLAND: Yeah.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- right?
MR. BOLAND: Well, it's a remodel. But you just asked for an example, so I'm just -- I don't know where you're going with your question, I guess is what I mean. You're saying does somebody hate Master Mechanical; is that what you --
BY MR. EVANS:
Q. No, no. No, not that. I'm talking about things like they're overboard on safety, they're overboard on --
A. Oh.
Q. -- watching you, they're overboard on this, they're overboard on that. Do you have a lot of that going on in your --

A. Every, every single job is a safety -- it's just so -- this industry is so safety, they're tying you off on scissor, scissor-lifts now. I mean, it's so safety conscious now that you're in big trouble if you don't and -- you know, you're in big trouble if you don't do something.
Q. Right. But what I'm getting at is, from what we have heard from other interviews, is that once you started your work, the CenterPoint guys weren't around that much until, you know, you're done with the work. Is that a true statement?
A. Yeah. And sometimes -- yeah, sometimes that is a true statement.
Q. They leave you alone to do the work?
A. Yep.
Q. And you don't get micromanaged by their people?
A. No.
Q. Are there other customers you do work for that you're micromanaged every hour of the day, they have some representative on site? Is that typical in your work?
A. No. No.
Q. So they'll be more like CenterPoint?
A. See, that's why I'm not sure where you're going. So if you were on (indiscernible) job, there'd be 10 trades there and, you know, people are walking through all the time or you'd have -- I mean, there's -- on a lot of the CenterPoint jobs there's one trade there unless CenterPoint has their diggers there or their --

you know, the people putting the pipe in, you know, Michels might be on the job. You know, there's --
Q. Um-hum.
A. I mean -- but, yeah, a lot of times we might be doing a contract or -- yes.
Q. And when you're the only contractor there, you may or may not see, like, a company like CenterPoint come around and monitor your safety habits or take an accountability if you're wearing your PPE or if you've got your ladders tied off and all that?
A. Correct. But we try to always do that. And now we have -- we do have inspectors swing by every now and then. You're working on a gas job, they see your truck, they have stopped by periodically to look for your license.
Q. And that inspector would be a city inspector?
A. Yep. Yep. And then --
Q. Okay. But not a CenterPoint?
A. No. No.
Q. Okay. We talked earlier that, I know from my brother's experience, there's like a core team in most every kind of mechanical shop out there and, you know, was Steve one of the core guys?
A. Yeah, he was -- he had been around for a while in our shop.
Q. So Steve would be -- when push comes to shove and there's recession city, Steve would probably be -- always be on board, more than likely?

A. Well, he has sat at home. So, I mean, we've had slow times. Steve has sat at home. We've had 10-year employees have -- one of them had 2 months off this year and he was a core employee.
Q. Okay.
A. We were slow. So I mean, it's not if you just -- it's not -- if we're slow, we're slow. The shop can't pay you not to work.
Q. Right. Okay.
A. That's just not how that works.
Q. Okay. But he's not one of the guys that's going to be sitting in the hall for any length of time if he does go down because --
A. Yeah.
Q. -- he's probably a known commodity?
A. Yep.
Q. And they know if he's sitting down on the bench, they're going to grab him up?
A. Yep, yep. We lose a lot of good fitters that way. We lose a lot of good plumbers that way. If there's no work --
Q. Okay. And would you consider Steve in that category?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. That's what I was getting at.
Okay. When you did the walkthrough of this particular job, did you have any input as to how -- if they got to the point where they couldn't do work because of a delay, that they might have a Plan B that they might go to? Was there ever any discussion that

said, hey, if we get to this point and you don't have enough work, try doing this? Was that discussed?
A. From CenterPoint saying that we can't do --
Q. No, from -- no, from you guys. When --
A. No. So now you got to say that over, I'm not --
Q. When you were with your -- with Alan --
A. Yeah.
Q. -- and with your -- with Steve, right? I mean, Don.
A. Yeah. And I just don't want to put Don's name on it because it might not --
Q. Okay.
A. It might have been the other guy. I just don't --
Q. Okay, let's just say --
A. I don't want to do that.
Q. -- the rep from the school --
A. Yeah, yeah.
Q. -- yourself and the CenterPoint person, okay? When you three were there, was there ever discussion that you had, that you and your Master Mechanical guy -- did you have any kind of point in the conversation where you started looking at tasks and say if you can't do this, we should have a Plan B and do this instead?
A. No.
Q. That was not -- nothing -- okay.
A. All they worried about was not having more water in there, in the basement. They really didn't want these new holes to leak.

MR. EVANS: Okay. I'm sure I'm going to have more questions later, but that's all I have right now.

BY MR. JONES:

Q. You said you did the -- Shane Jones. You said you did the material list for the bid?

A. Yeah.

Q. Were you involved in any other portion of the bid?

A. No.

Q. So not suggesting the type of work that would be covered within the bid?

A. No. I just get a material list so we can get a number out. We don't even have the job at that point.

Q. Okay, so I'm just trying to understand. If you put a bid out with the pipe and things, there must be some sort of indicators on from this point to this point or including certain pieces of work; there was none of that put down on your notes to do the bid?

A. I'm not sure what -- like, say, I would take a look here, I know that I need two core drill holes in the wall. You guys have a 4-inch flange off the end of that. We have to -- your meter set on that wall was a 4-inch one and you had a 2-inch one and we were tying into those, so I already know my sizes of my pipe.

We took -- it was a 16M meter, 16 million, so that's -- so we know the distance between the boilers and that thing so we could figure out -- and that was the only take-offs on that so we could figure out our pipe size and kind of went from that. And you know

what, none of that was figured out till we got the job. I just took --

Q. Okay.

A. I took everything off in 4-inch pipe, took it off in 2-inch pipe, because that's what you guys had. That's kind of what the game plan was and that would be a worst-case scenario for us.

Q. Do you ever see the bids?

A. No. I'm told we got it --

Q. So I'm asking -- if you're looking at the page, you can see about halfway down on the page, it talks about included.

A. Yeah.

Q. And it goes through the things that are obviously included in it.

A. Yeah.

Q. And there's pieces underneath it not included.

A. Yeah.

Q. So looking through that -- demolition of piping, working on existing meters. Is that anything that's ever covered in what you put together for a job?

A. Sometimes we do have to demo the pipe and we -- if we have to knock something out of the way to get ourselves in there or if we have to -- some jobs, you know, you cut your piece of pipe clear so you can do your tie-in and then, other jobs, they come afterwards and say can you demo the rest of our pipe out? So after you guys have pinched off your line, we have demoed your

pipe in the past because whether you guys didn't want to or however, you know, however that works, so --

Q. But that's after the gas is off and --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- it's considered abandoned?

A. Yeah, yeah. And even so, we still don't go through the walls and we weld a cap on, you know, on the bigger pipe. We do it -- you treat it, you still treat it like it's a gas line because it's still an open line and it's -- we don't know what you guys did on the other side, but they tell you it's good to go and we would --

Q. But it's usually --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- working with a CenterPoint employee to turn gas off while you're doing that portion or not?

A. No, if we were to demo a pipe, we demo with you guys not even there, so --

Q. On live gas?

A. Yeah, we've demoed pipe on -- but it's not like we're demoing a live line. You know what I mean, it's not a live line we're demoing. But if you're cutting a little piece out, you cut it out to make yours work, but it's not -- nothing, nothing live.

Q. Is there a difference between gas company piping and customer piping?

A. Yes.

Q. What is that?

A. Customer piping's after the meter.
Q. Okay, is there -- to your knowledge, is there different training to work on either side of it?
A. I couldn't say yes or no on that. I don't know. I believe that you guys have something else on yours, but we have in the past pulled meters off the wall and tied into them with you guys' knowledge.
Q. Okay, but typically dead meters, correct?
A. No, a valve could be shut off, and we have pulled stuff out of the way so we can do our tie-ins. It doesn't happen that often, but it has happened. Or even, you know, you shut a piece of -- a valve off and you worked on it. Or we tie a tee into the -- you know, you shut the valve and you put a tee in there, it's a live line on this side of the valve where we put a tee in. But that's usually on the customer's side of the pipe.
Q. Customer side. So the customer --
A. Yeah.
Q. -- side is downstream or upstream?
A. Downstream from the meter. You guys are upstream from the meter.
MR. JONES: Okay, thank you.
BY MR. BOWLES:
Q. So Pat, this is Dan Bowles from Minnehaha. If it's appropriate -- I don't have great pictures, but I've got a picture of Curt and of Don, if that --

A. Oh.
Q. -- might help.
A. Yeah, yeah. Oh, yeah. Yep, yep.
Q. And I apologize for these pictures. I didn't pick them on purpose. But this --
A. Yeah.
Q. This is Don Dubois.
A. Okay.
Q. And this is Curt Bjorlin.
A. Okay, so is that Don? I think he's the one who wants to start at 5:30 and somebody said he couldn't. And if he was the boss, that's why -- how come he couldn't.
MR. EVANS: This is Roger Evans. Don was the person who was at the meeting, the walkthrough?
MR. BOLAND: I think the first meeting it was the other guy, not that guy.
BY MR. BOWLES:
Q. You think it was Curt at the first?
A. Yeah. And this guy was at this -- the one when we just met with CenterPoint and Dubois.
Q. And then Don at the second?
A. No. This guy was the one a week ago.
Q. That's Don.
A. Oh, yeah. So he's the one who called your outside maintenance people to move trees because there was --

Q. Yes.
A. Yep, yep, yep, that looks --
Q. I can't testify, but I think others have said that.
A. Yeah, yeah.
Q. And then this is Curt Bjorlin, his boss.
A. I think he's the one who opened the door. So he's the one, yeah. So that's -- the other guy is correct.
Q. Well, I don't know if I want to be the one questioning, but I don't know -- so which --
A. This guy was there the first day.
Q. That was the first meeting with you --
A. The other guy --
Q. -- and Al?
A. Yep. And then the other guy was on this last one.
Q. On what date? Was that Monday, August 31? I mean, July 31?
A. No, I think it was last Tuesday, to be honest. The day before the accident.
Q. Okay.
A. That would've been on -- the accident was the 2nd, so that would've been the 1st, that -- the white-haired guy.
Q. Don Dubois.
A. Yeah, yeah.
MR. EVANS: So can we restate that? The first meeting was with whom?
MR. BOLAND: Was this guy.

MR. BOWLES: And the person pointed at is Don -- or Curt Bjorlin, our director of facilities, was at the first one.

MR. EVANS: The first meeting. The second meeting was?

MR. BOLAND: And Don might've been there the first meeting, too. That I can't recollect, but there might've been two people to begin with.

MR. EVANS: Okay.

MR. BOLAND: And for sure, that guy was the one on Tuesday.

MR. BOWLES: Pointing at Don Dubois.

MR. EVANS: Okay. Thank you.

MR. BOWLES: That's all I have.

MS. SCHWARZ: I don't have any questions.

BY MR. PIERZINA:

Q. All right. And this is Brian Pierzina with PHMSA. Pat, when -- just kind of back up. So after you prepared your material list, you turned that in to your project manager; is that right?

A. Yeah.

Q. And what's the next that you recall hearing about this job?

A. I got a call from Nick, it might've been a call or an email, but one or the other. He let me know that we got the job for Minnehaha and --

Q. Okay.

A. So I knew we had it.

Q. Do you remember about how long after the -- after you prepared your material list that he --

A. I can't tell you. I do not know. I would be guessing.
Q. A month, a month or a couple weeks or --
A. Oh, it was probably within the month. It was probably within that month. You know, it's -- I think we did it in June and it's -- I think that's 2 months later, so it had to be within --
Q. Okay.
A. -- a month, I think we were notified.
Q. So when Nick lets you know that you got the Minnehaha job, what's next for you on that job?
A. So I'm not sure that Al called me or I called him, I want to know what's going on, but it's usually he calls me and says he has a meter set on the wall -- because we see each other on all these other bids. So, you know, you just I say I'm putting the meter set up -- I don't know exactly when it was said, but the meter sets on the wall. And we see -- we saw each other -- I mean, we probably see each other once a week, you know, it's not like --
Q. Okay. All right.
A. So he said the meter sets on the wall. We had had a game plan -- I don't know what the dates are, but something was going on at the school, they said we couldn't do it that week. And that was the initial game plan and then it was pushed off. And I think I went on a vacation, another time they said you can do it this week and I think I was on vacation or something was going on. And I got a call last week. Well, it would've been the week before that, from Al saying that they need it done before school, which

we knew, and it had to be done by -- sometime this week because the students or teachers were coming back. And, you know, it's --

Q. Well, that flavor helps, that you're talking with Al, you know, about this job and other jobs --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- and stuff like that. That does help, kind of, you know, make us understand how things flow together.

So after you figure out the logistics of programs, vacations, and all that stuff, do -- how does Steve get assigned to the job?

A. He happened to -- needed work. So we had a couple other jobs going and I -- it's my job to manage the people, and I asked if he could fit this in. He was going on vacation, and he said -- yeah, he said, do you need me to take off -- I was going to take off Friday, but he said if you need me to take off Monday, I'll take off Monday instead.

And I called him up and -- Al had called me, not last week, the week before, and he said that, hey, can you talk to Charlie and line up what you need dug out of there? And I called Steve and I called Charlie up, and Tuesday morning we were meeting to discuss what we were going to do.

Q. Okay. So what -- when does Steve first start work on the site?

A. First time there was Tuesday.

Q. First time was on Tuesday.

A. Right. And I had been there once before.

Q. All right, once before.
A. So my second time on the job was Tuesday, too.
Q. Okay. So you were there on the walkthrough with Al.
A. Yeah.
Q. And your second time at that site was Tuesday with him, right?
A. Yeah. The 1st, right?
Q. Yep. Okay.
A. Yeah.
Q. All right. And then just to go back, I want to make sure I understood things correctly, and if we need to look at pictures, we can look at pictures. But when you need to tie in to the customer's piping, do you have to -- and your only valve is the shut-off valve coming into the building, do you have to get approval to shut that valve or do you just do that?
A. Well, for sure, we would talk to the maintenance because we have to make sure we aren't shutting something off that is not off. But I'm trying to think of an occasion where we've ever had to do that and I do not recollect. But we have shut off the gas lines to tie in.
Q. So when you do that, when you're getting ready to open up the customer's piping and that valve was shut, what's the next thing that should be done?
A. Say your question over.
Q. I'm just wondering what the next thing is, the next thing

that should be done after you shut the gas. You said you shut off the gas. Do you, you know, try to bleed pressure or do you --

A. Yeah.

Q. You know, what do you --

A. Oh, yeah. So a lot of times we would -- if we have a gas line we're going to weld on -- so the one day we had a job for CenterPoint, it's off of Highway 55, we go in there and we purge the lines first if we're going to weld on them, because there's always some residual gas and sometimes even with nitrogen running through the lines, you still have a little flame around your -- you know, where you're welding. But we try to purge everything out of there. We don't want to flood the building with gas. We don't want to -- I mean, mostly the thing is you are trying to put the gas, you know, outside.

Q. All right. So if you could grab those pictures again. I'm just wondering how you would go about -- in an application like this, how you would go about trying to purge that piping before you can cut or weld?

A. And you know what --

Q. I don't know if you can tell --

A. -- we didn't discuss this, so I don't even know what it is. So on this line right here, this one we weren't even -- it wasn't even involved because that wouldn't even be done until that day, that --

MR. EVANS: Excuse me. I'm sorry to interrupt. We're

looking at Exhibit 4 and you're pointing to what?

MR. BOLAND: So this one we wouldn't even have done anything with that day. And not -- no, this is, should I say how I would do it? I would not know what Steve was planning that day.

BY MR. PIERZINA:

Q. Right. I was asking how you would do it.

A. So if I was doing it, I would be shutting the valve off to this meter right here, and as you can see -- you know, I don't know if there's a valve on that side. I would've shut the valve off there. We would've capped that line and we would've shot the gas mostly into the mechanical room. You would've opened the damper or something and shot it right through the roof, or we would've put nitrogen on it and put it on a -- ran it outside with a hose or, you know, found a spot we could do that in.

Q. Right. Before you cut into the pipe or tried to weld or --

A. Yep. Yeah, we would try to -- we would make sure there was no gas in it.

Q. All right. Okay. And just to back up. So when you -- so you were out there on August 1st and you had Steve, Steve out there with you. On a typical job, what other -- how often are you speaking with Steve or your fitter? You know, is it -- are you keeping, like, a daily check to see what kind of progress they're making or --

A. I was going to swing by. I mean --

Q. Okay.

A. -- there was another job that I was at, another CenterPoint job at the time, and I was going to swing back and just see how they're doing and --
Q. Okay.
A. -- see if they needed anything, if you're short a fitting or if you're -- you know, something changed, you're doing a different plan.
Q. Okay. So that's a normal process?
A. Yeah, yeah. And it's not a -- and I'm a -- I don't know how to say it, but, you know, your brother's a fitter, we talk things over, maybe this would work better, maybe this would work better. It's not like you're, all right, hey, I'm changing -- I'm going to try this instead, I'm going to -- you know, it's -- but it's kind of, it's Steve's job now. You know, it's not --
Q. Right. He doesn't need to be babysat.
A. Yeah. No, that's --
Q. So you'll check with him and if he has a problem he would be -- is he -- are you his first call for help if he runs into a snag or --
A. Yeah, if something goes wrong, people call me.
Q. Okay. Let's say, you know, you have a plan for the job and let's say there are delays that are beyond his or your control, are there provisions in your arrangements with CenterPoint Energy that, you know, if -- let's say CenterPoint, you know, isn't available to do the whole -- you know, for a couple days, is there

a way for you guys to -- you know, you have nothing else to do. Is there a way for you guys to recover costs or do you just pull out of the job for a while?

A. That's why, as you can see, we exclude overtime, too. So if pushed to something, it's -- but usually that doesn't happen, so it's not been a -- it's not been ever an issue, really. So --

Q. All right. And in 100 -- you said like 100-some jobs --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- the scheduling, timing, none of that has ever become a big enough issue for --

A. Yeah, we had more than enough time to do this little job. Because we had 2 weeks to do it, it was -- we've done -- you know, we've done a lot of them. We kind of know what we're --

MR. PIERZINA: Okay. I think that's all I have now.

MR. HOEPF: Great. Thanks.

BY MR. HOEPF:

Q. Hey, Pat. This is Mike with the NTSB. I just want to talk a little bit more about Steve and Logan Kass and the idea of pipe demolition. Would Steve Kass be qualified to demo pipe?

A. Yeah.

Q. Would Logan Kass be qualified to demo pipe?

A. With Steve's direction.

Q. Okay, okay. So in the job that you see there, you've kind of been looking at the pictures, do you think you would have to demo the pipe to be able to perform the work?

A. Something had to be demoed. How would we cut into the line? So something had to be demoed.
Q. Okay. So --
A. We were tying into a line going into the mechanical room, we had to splice.
Q. Okay. So would it be fair -- would it be fair to say that demoing the pipe would absolutely be required to complete the job?
A. Absolutely.
Q. Okay. I'm just wondering, like, on this document right here, I'm pointing to the -- well, can you describe that document? Have you seen that before?
A. Yeah, you showed it to me. It's our -- the bid package we sent for this job.
Q. Oh, but you hadn't seen it before just now, though?
A. No, you're showing it to me.
Q. Okay. But you were not aware of this document beforehand?
A. No.
Q. Okay, okay. So I just -- I see on here that it says that piping -- demolition of piping is not included, but does that mean that you wouldn't do it?
A. No, we have to do it. I'm not sure why that's written in there, but I know that we've done jobs in the past and, for example, startup or relighting where you go into a place and you spend hours afterwards starting everything up and -- so we just started excluding the stuff that was -- you couldn't foresee what

it was going to amount to. But every job we do has demo where we have to do our tie-in or you can't tie in. You have to be able to cut the pipe to do your tie-in.

Q. Okay, okay. So should I understand this as being a contractual issue, where it's listed as not included but in reality it has to be done in order to complete the job? I know I'm being redundant, but I mean, is that, is that -- sorry.

Is there a question?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Is everything okay? Just checking.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Make sure the knuckleheads upstairs aren't bothering you guys.

MR. EVANS: Thank you.

MR. BOLAND: But just like this, I mean, if we're working overtime to try to get something done, you're still doing it.

BY MR. HOEPF:

Q. Right, right.

A. I mean, you're still doing it. I mean, you still have to get it done. I mean, underground digging, we exclude that, but they do the digging. What happens if we have to put a shovel to something to make it so we have a better fit? It's not --

Q. Right.

A. It's -- you know, it's working on an existing meter, the meter's there and we still have to disconnect alongside of it. I

mean, it's not -- you still have to do something to it, it's not --

Q. Right, right. Do you think CenterPoint understands that from -- I mean, from the working relationship that you've had with them in the past, that even though this bid doesn't -- even though it's listed as not --

A. I would -- you know what, I'm assuming. I would say yes, they do, because we've done a hundred of them and this right here says we have not included the following, it doesn't mean we aren't doing them.

Q. Right.

A. That could be just that we run over, that you're trying to recoup the cost. And I don't know anything about the project managing side of it. I don't care about the money side of it, so that's kind of not something I would even --

Q. Okay, okay. I just --

A. We're out there to get the job done. We aren't --

Q. Right.

A. We don't know any of this stuff --

Q. Okay.

A. -- you know what I mean?

Q. Yeah, yeah. No, I understand. You never -- prior to today, you've never even seen this document.

A. No. No, but what I have done in the past is when I do it, I say exclude -- make sure you don't forget to exclude digging and

startup on this one because it could be an apartment building with 30 buildings in it that everyone has an electric -- or a gas stove in it. Well, no, we can't do that.

Q. Um-hum.

A. And they have a -- and CenterPoint -- and when I point I don't mean you, but I meant CenterPoint has a crew that goes up and does all the startups. We just don't want to be -- and we do startups. CenterPoint calls us for startups, too, where we will go start up something that they have done, re-piping, but the unit heaters are 30 feet up in the air and they have no way to do it. So I'll go rent a lift and I'll start up. You know, it's not -- it's --

Q. Um-hum.

A. You know, we work side by side. I mean, we've had a good relationship for a long time. It's, you know --

Q. Um-hum.

A. We've worked well together.

Q. Okay. I'm just -- yeah. And that's exactly what I'm looking for is a little bit of clarification of, you know, the paper says this, but in reality, you know, how --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- you're going to get things done, you know. And so I'm just kind of trying to get an idea of that work tempo --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- feels like, you know, what that working relationship, what

that feels like. One more point about Steve and Logan Kass, do you know both those guys?
A. Yeah.
Q. Do you know Logan?
A. Yeah, yeah.
Q. Okay. Does Logan typically work with Steve?
A. Yeah.
Q. Does he work with anybody else or does he just --
A. Oh, yeah. He's been -- Steve's been off on jobs by himself and Logan has been a gofer at Garden City, and that's been a lot of hours in 3 months and you've got to have somebody doing a lot of grunt work.
Q. Um-hum. So what would you say that -- assuming there's a journeyman or somebody who's monitoring Logan, you know, what kind of bandwidth does that give him to do things? I mean, you said he could demo some pipe. Actually, you know what? Can you define a little bit more precisely about what you mean by demo pipe? Does that involve just carrying something away?
A. Yeah, do things that are --
Q. Or does that involve the shut-off of a valve and unscrewing of a flange and then taking it all apart --
A. No, I would assume that he would be the one hauling it away, or if you had a chunk of it there and you had to cut it in half. That's more of what I would assume was going on.
Q. Okay. But he's not doing any -- would you expect him to do

any welding?
A. No, no.
Q. Okay, okay. Even with somebody watching him?
A. No, no. No.
Q. Okay. I'm just --
A. He couldn't even solder, couldn't even solder. You know, that's not what he's there for.
Q. Okay, okay. I'm just trying to get a better understanding of what the helper role is.
A. Yeah.
Q. So he's really just kind of grunt work, carrying stuff around and --
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay.
A. Yeah, probably run out to the truck and get a ladder. You know what I mean, it's more the --
Q. Uh-huh, uh-huh. Okay. And I've just got one more question, at least for now, and you've already sort of touched on this, so I don't mean to, you know, kind of just belabor the point. But it sounds like, in terms of the coordination of the work activities, it's sort of -- so, for example, you know, to pick something at less than random, the work that was being done on August 2nd at Minnehaha Academy between Master Mechanical and CenterPoint, it sounds like it's sort of delegated to people on the jobsite to sort of just kind of work out how they're doing things. Would you

say it's a fair characterization of this?
A. For sure. We have -- there's six, seven, eight fitters who have done CenterPoint work. It's just not Steve. We have all -- as you were saying, your core crew or whatever.
Q. Uh-huh.
A. All the guys have done CenterPoint work. And I don't want to say every one of the guys there, but the bulk of them have done CenterPoint work. So --
Q. Okay. And so you're not -- you know, you don't have some kind of safety plan or something that, you know, you give them or some kind of documentation of emergency procedures or -- I mean, you kind of just -- you just kind of let them work it out according to the details of the job because you assume that they're qualified. I mean, is that a fair characterization of the situation?
A. Yeah. Yes.
MR. HOEPF: Okay. That's all I've got for now. You need a quick break, Roger?
MR. EVANS: No.
BY MR. EVANS:
Q. This is Roger Evans. I just got a couple of questions. When Steve was working on this project, did you ever get calls from him while this project was going on while he was working there?
A. No, not until after something -- he called and said something had happened.

Q. Okay. But up until then you did not get --
A. No, not at all.
Q. And do you socialize with Steve? Would you see him at night and go out for a beer or anything like that, during this -- while this was going on? Like he come back into the shop and you guys shoot the crap or --
A. No.
Q. Nothing like that?
A. No, no. No, but we have done jobs out of town together where afterwards we've gone out. I mean, we have people -- we have four or five people do a job out of town, you know.
Q. Okay. Right. I'm going to -- I made my own exhibit here today, Exhibit 6-RDE.
A. Okay.
Q. This valve is that valve that has the arm in it.
A. Yep.
Q. I think this is somewhat of an accurate -- Mr. PHMSA?
MR. PIERZINA: I'm sorry?
MR. EVANS: Is that close to what we have?
MR. PIERZINA: Oh, let's see here. Close enough, probably.
MR. EVANS: Okay, good.
BY MR. EVANS:
Q. So this Exhibit 6-RDE has a -- it's a sketch of the bunker and it shows the main out front and it shows the service line going in, with the fire valve between the main and the building.

It shows the main meter and the interruptible meter, okay? This valve right here would indicate that valve that's in that photograph that shows the angle on it?
A. Yeah.
Q. It's shown as being open on that line?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. When you were looking at this and you're walking through, was there any conversations at all about -- and excuse me -- the one line, I think, is over here in the corner, the vertical line. Then it goes -- there's a vertical line over here.
A. Yeah, going out to the boiler. Yeah.
Q. Up to the boiler. And then you were going to have to demo -- maybe you can tell me. What were you thinking about demoing on this?
A. So right now, we were going to come in the wall from this right here and shoot across and we were going to tie into this piece of pipe right here.
Q. Okay. So this was -- I think this is the wall, the building wall, right?
A. Yeah.
Q. And your new meters are here?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. And then your main, the big line, was going to be a new penetration and another new penetration here?
A. Yeah.

Q. And you were going to come this way and probably turn up, like that, and run down this way and tie into that, right?
A. Yeah.
Q. And there was going to be a valve somewhere in here?
A. Yeah. Well, it would've been -- yeah, it would've been at probably right -- somewhere right around in here, we would've done maybe a 90 with a flange on it so you could shove it through. You do whichever side where you'd have needed your weld once you got through.
Q. Right, okay.
A. So whether it's shoving it this way and putting a weld on the inside or shoving it that way and putting a weld in the dirt, that's --
Q. Okay. But you're going to have a valve somewhere and I'll show a valve --
A. Yeah.
Q. -- for the heck of it, right here.
A. Yes.
Q. There's going to be a valve on this and that's going to be your main line to get to the boiler?
A. Correct.
Q. Okay. So this piece here, I'm going to say, is new.
A. Yeah.
Q. And this one here is existing, correct?
A. Yeah.

Q. So this is going to come across here, like that, and tie into this?
A. Correct.
Q. And that was going to be -- you were going to cut a tee in, correct?
A. No, we probably would've done a 90 there because we --
Q. Oh, a 90 --
A. I mean, because that's -- everything else is being demoed out, so it would've been a 90 right in through --
Q. Okay, so you just put a 90 -- this is going to turn up like that, right?
A. Yeah.
Q. Something like that.
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. So this would be the only valve that you have in this system to cut this gas off, to do any sort of work, correct?
A. According to the pictures, yes.
Q. Yeah.
A. Because I didn't see --
MR. EVANS: Right. And I think, Shane, you would agree that that was the only valve to be able to cut the service off into the building?
MR. JONES: On the inside, yes.
MR. EVANS: On the inside, yeah.
BY MR. EVANS:

Q. So this valve, when you were doing the walkthrough, was there ever -- was Steve talking about this valve at all?
A. No.
Q. Were you talking about this valve?
A. Yeah.
Q. And what was your conversation about this valve?
A. The valve was in the on position.
Q. Right. Now, when you said --
A. But --
Q. Go ahead.
A. -- I think it might've been opened.
Q. The operator showed it to be in the off position.
A. Correct.
Q. But you think it may have been in the open position?
A. The valve handle was in the off position.
Q. Right.
A. I think the valve was open.
Q. Um-hum, okay. So in the off position for the sketch, this valve would be like this to be off?
A. The handle is in the perpendicular.
Q. In the perpendicular. And that to you, when you saw it, would've meant that that valve was off?
A. Yep.
Q. Were there discussions about this valve being in the off position at the time you were doing the walkthrough?

A. I might walk out, I looked -- I took a double look at it because I thought the valve was open, but it was in the off position. So I just grabbed the handle and I put my shoulder to it because for some reason I thought the valve might've looked like it was open, but the handle was saying it was shut.
Q. Okay.
A. But the valve did not move.
Q. Right. So did Steve acknowledge you doing that and saying --
A. Yeah, he was right next to me.
Q. So you made a conversation. Was the impression that Steve had at the time, was that that valve was closed? You know, the valve was closed; is that right?
A. Yeah. Well, at the -- you know what? I don't know what he was thinking. I don't.
Q. Okay.
A. I know that when I walked by it, the valve handle was shut. I've seen valves before, I thought it might've been in the open position, I took my shoulder to it and I made -- you know. And it didn't budge anywhere, so --
Q. And your indication by doing that, was that --
A. I wanted to see if it moved.
Q. And it didn't move?
A. No.
Q. Okay. And with that, what did you surmise?
A. Nothing. I assumed it was still open.

Q. You assumed it was still open even --
A. I think because, you know, sometimes you look at a valve, there's stops on it.
Q. Right.
A. And the valve handle was closed and -- that's what I can tell you.
Q. Did you happen to look at the stops on this valve?
A. That's why I think I thought that it might've been open, but -- you know what, I see your picture there. I see that it looks like a square lug. I thought it was a -- I thought it was --
Q. Octagonal?
A. Yes. So I mean, then -- so I'm not even -- and I can't even tell you what type of valve it was. But, you know, and it looks like that, but I -- because it was just a brief, you know --
Q. Oh, yeah.
A. -- it was the thing, but it's --
Q. Yeah. And we're not trying to --
A. But just, this was in the closed position and I thought it looked open and because of that, I put my shoulder to it and -- you know, I grabbed and put my shoulder to it to see if it moved and it did not move.
Q. Okay. So were you under the impression that the work that was going to go forward was going to involve the reliability of that valve being closed?
A. To be honest with you, I thought there was a valve on this

side, but I can't -- when I'm looking at your pictures because -- you know, when you see this, I can't even tell if there is a valve there. But I thought there was a valve higher up on that line and I would assume that's where we would've tied in. But Steve was the one on the job. And --

Q. Okay. So based on -- I'm not trying to implicate anything, I mean, we're trying --

A. No, no, no. I'm just saying exactly what --

Q. Yeah. We're trying to get the facts, okay. So, and I don't want you to think that we are pointing fingers.

A. No, no, no. I understand. I --

Q. We don't point fingers.

A. No, I know. I understand.

Q. And I can tell you one thing, you know, we don't ever, in our investigations, blame people.

A. Yeah.

Q. We never do. We look at the situation. If someone makes a mistake, there's a reason behind that mistake; it could be training, it could be human factors, he could be on a medication, he could be sleep deprived, there are all sorts of reasons why someone could make a mistake. So we don't --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- blame people. I want you to get that straight, okay? So anyway, with you looking at these pictures today and thinking that there's a valve on this side --

A. Just to let you know, even if there wasn't a valve, I wasn't -- you know, it was not -- I would not have -- I would not assume there's a valve there. I would not think that there wasn't a valve. You know what I mean? What I'm -- you know, if that was a valve he needed to shut, then that's the one he would've shut.
Q. Okay. So his actions to -- and this is what I want to just ask you about. Steve was standing next to you when you --
A. Yeah.
Q. I mean, you just made the comment -- did you make the comment to him at the same time, that I think this valve --
A. Yeah.
Q. -- is actually open and not closed?
A. Yeah, yeah.
Q. That is what you said to him?
A. Yeah, I said that I caught it out of the side of my eye and I said shit, and I thought holy crap, that valve's open, in my mind. And I said something, and he was right there when I was trying to shut it and --
Q. Okay, so --
A. But I'm telling you, too, I'm looking at your pictures and I thought it was a different valve, because I -- you know, we were in there for, what, 8, 10 minutes tops. You know, that's --
Q. Okay, okay. So once you saw this valve, were you thinking that the basic mode he was going to go to was to address something on this dead side of this valve to do his work?

A. To be honest with you, I thought it was going to be over here, and I'm assuming that there was a valve and I don't even want to do that, but I would've -- if there wasn't, that's probably where he would've started off.
Q. Okay, so --
A. And I'm guessing.
Q. Yeah, okay. But that's a fair, that's a fair statement, but -- and we don't know, but -- but if there are no valves and if this was your line and you had to do this job, you would probably go to this valve, then, to do that work; is that correct?
A. Correct.
Q. Okay. And in your mind, if you had to do that, would you feel at ease if this valve was closed, that you could drop the flange bolts and the nuts and all that on this side and go forward with whatever you wanted to do? Put a blind flange on this or do whatever you wanted to do to kind of keep this commodity in place and not do it dangerously?
A. Yep, I probably would've gone to the mechanical room and see where I could've bled it off and proceed with that route.
Q. Okay. When you said I think that valve is open, did Steve make any comments to the fact that that valve was --
A. No, it's -- you know, it's stopped. See, I can't even tell you what kind of valve it was. But, you know, if you've seen them, so --
Q. It's a Walworth, and it's 50 years old, probably.

A. Yeah, you know what I mean? So it looked like it was shut.
Q. But when you walked away, you said that valve's open; that's kind of what you thought?
A. In my mind, I thought the valve might be open, yes.
Q. Okay. So let's just say, for instance, that this valve is -- you know, maybe someone who's going to be looking at this, they look at it from the standpoint of, well, maybe if I just loosen this a tad bit, I'll get some flow out of this because of -- you know, that there's gas coming in this way, that you could break this and perhaps get an odor of mercaptan at that point.
A. Well, of course. Yeah.
Q. To prove that it was either -- to prove that it was closed, right?
A. You're asking if somebody cracked the flange --
Q. Yes.
A. -- would they smell gas?
Q. Right.
A. Well, I would assume that that would be the -- if you had gas on the other side, I would assume you'd be able to smell it.
Q. Right. So when you crack this here and there must be gas from this other side that's going to come back this way, as well, right?
A. You know what, because when they turn their gas off at the boilers, did the boilers fire till it ran out of gas? Did the -- you know, how --

Q. I mean, before he addressed this, he had to go up on the other end and do something to get the gas out of this line so that he could test this to see if this valve was opened or closed, correct? Isn't that what you would've done?
A. That's what I would've done.
Q. Okay. So you could close -- if this valve were closed, you could go up and say, okay, I'm going to shut the valve off and then see -- let all the gas get out of there because it's going to burn through the boiler.
A. Well, the boilers weren't done -- yeah, you would want to make sure your line -- yeah, you want to make sure your line is empty.
Q. Okay. So as far as the things you've done in the past with doing this kind of work, would -- without this being squeezed off, without this fire valve being closed, would you -- would this be a normal practice that you would do on a closed valve here, to break the flange, if you know that this one has been relieved on the other side? Would that be an acceptable practice that you've done in the past?
A. Yeah, it would be an acceptable practice. But --
Q. That you've done in the past?
A. I, personally, have never done that, but I could see that being done, yes.
Q. Okay. Have you ever seen anyone else do that in your company or in your career?

A. No, because I --
Q. I guess what I'm getting at, have you ever seen someone do something like this without a squeeze-off out here? Out here, I mean.
A. You know what, this -- I would say this one, yes, that there's a valve there. But because that's a -- I don't know, I'm not -- I can't, I can't say.
Q. Okay. But you do acknowledge that there's questionable -- there was a question about where this valve handle was versus if the valve was open or closed?
A. It was in the closed position, that valve probably was in --
Q. The valve handle was indicating a closed position, but --
A. Yes.
Q. -- it looked as though the valve was open based on the indicators on the knob, on the cap?
A. I can't even say that because --
Q. You didn't --
A. I just, you know what, I don't -- I don't recollect what the valve looked like. I don't -- but when I looked at it, it struck me odd. That's what I can say.
Q. That it was questionable?
A. Yeah.
Q. But if you were going to work on this, you would look into it a little deeper before you worked on it, that type of a thought process?

A. Yeah.
Q. Okay.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Off the record. Could we take a couple minute comfort break, please?
MR. EVANS: Yes, we'll go off the record.
Off the record of the Pat Boland interview.
(Off the record.)
(On the record.)
MR. EVANS: We're back on the record with Pat Boland.
BY MR. EVANS:
Q. Pat, we were talking about this Exhibit 6-RDE I have right here. So with this type of a situation here, would you ever get pushback if you had explained something like this to CenterPoint or would this be something that would just be the way you're going to go about your work?
A. Would I -- I don't understand the question.
Q. If this had been explained in detail to CenterPoint, exactly how this was going to be done, if they're breaking -- closing this valve or breaking this this way and making sure the gas was bled off all the way back up, would this have caused an alarm, do you think, for the CenterPoint person, based on your experience with doing this type of work? Would they have said, hey, we don't want you doing that or we want you to pinch it off here?
A. I do not know what they would say.
Q. You don't know?

A. No. We've been able to do stuff all along. We've just been able to do it, so I'm not -- they've never said no, so I can't --
Q. So would you say, then, in the past that they trusted you no matter how you did it because you've always had success doing the work? Is that a fair statement?
A. That is a fair statement.
MR. EVANS: Okay, that's all I have.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No questions.
BY MR. HOEPF:
Q. I apologize if we covered this already. Just a couple of quick questions. If you come across a stuck valve, what are the safe operating procedures to get around that?
MR. HOEPF: And I'm sorry, if you just talked about that, Roger, we don't need to --
MR. EVANS: We have not talked about it. It's a good question.
MR. BOLAND: I probably would've got a pipe wrench.
MR. EVANS: Cheater bar.
BY MR. HOEPF:
Q. Can you elaborate a little bit for me?
A. Pipe wrench and cheater bar, you would've tried to move it.
MR. EVANS: You connect the bar -- this is Roger Evans speaking. You connect the bar at the end of this bar, a pipe or something over this. So then your engineering mechanics, force -- you know, out here is more, so you're putting more force on the

valve.

MR. HOEPF: Oh, yeah, I got you.

MR. EVANS: It's like trying to turn this with a small wrench versus a gigantic --

MR. HOEPF: Sure.

MR. PIERZINA: A torque enhancer.

MR. HOEPF: Yeah, okay. No, I got you. I got you.

MR. EVANS: A torque enhancer, yes, that's what it is.

MR. HOEPF: Okay.

MR. EVANS: Okay.

BY MR. HOEPF:

Q. And then you always keep that kind of tools -- those kind of tools with you?

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay. And what if that didn't work?

A. We would've had to figure something else.

Q. Would you say it's safe to just assume that the valve was closed and start loosening bolts downstream?

A. No, I don't think I would do that.

Q. You wouldn't do that because you wouldn't consider it to be safe?

A. Correct.

Q. All right. Has CenterPoint ever indicated to you where you could shut the gas off for a project?

A. No.

Q. Never?
A. No.
Q. Not written, not verbal?
A. No.
Q. It's entirely to your discretion?
A. Yeah.
MR. HOEPF: Okay, Roger.
BY MR. EVANS:
Q. This is Roger Evans. The question that Mike just asked about the -- how you do work with the gas not pinched at the service line -- so you've been doing this a long time, right?
A. Yeah.
Q. And before you were managing pipefitters you were doing this on your own, correct?
A. Yeah.
Q. Did you ever get disciplined, did you ever get warned, did you ever get a write-up because you did something without the service line being pinched, and you did something inside the building with the service line active and you pulled the job off with no hitch at all, that -- you've never had any recourse from anyone at CenterPoint?
A. No, most of our stuff is on the customer piping.
Q. But that's a good point. Just for the record, the boundary of CenterPoint to customer piping, where would you place that onus?

A. Right there.
Q. On this side?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. So this happens to be the -- this is CenterPoint pipe, right?
A. What pipe? No, that's the customer piping.
Q. No, I mean this arrow. I'm just saying there's an imaginary break here, so it's customer on this side and CenterPoint on that side? Somewhere on this, is there going to be a valve or something downstream of this? It's on either side of the meter, right?
A. Yeah. So I'm saying the meter is your, is your --
Q. CenterPoint.
A. Yeah. So CenterPoint's this side or this side.
Q. Right. But here is customer --
A. Yeah.
Q. Like that. And this is the arrow.
A. Yeah.
Q. You agree with that?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. So this is CenterPoint pipe up in here. This valve is on CenterPoint pipe, right?
A. Yes, I would think that's correct, according to the picture.
Q. Yeah. So if you were to tackle this -- break this flange at this, you're saying you're going against the grain because you're

supposed to be doing it on the customer side?
A. Yeah.
Q. Theoretically?
A. Theoretically, yes.
Q. But there's no valve down here and he didn't have any other place to do it, this was the most logical place for him to make the shift?
A. Yes. And we can't see if there's not a valve there, it could've been higher because of where the picture left off. So I'm not sure --
MR. EVANS: This question is directed at Mr. PHMSA.
MR. PIERZINA: Sure.
MR. EVANS: In all the sketches and things that you've seen out there or anywhere, was there a valve that you saw?
MR. PIERZINA: I haven't seen a valve. I don't know that -- I believe there is a valve to shut, other than the shut-off valve.
MR. EVANS: There?
MR. PIERZINA: Right.
BY MR. EVANS:
Q. Okay. So in your work with CenterPoint, generally speaking, you wouldn't touch valves that are on CenterPoint piping, you would always address valves on customer piping?
A. Correct.
Q. And that's normally how it's done?
A. Yeah.

Q. Okay.
A. We have popped meters off the wall on the day of a shutdown [redacted] where CenterPoint shows up later in the day and it's -- we have done stuff where it's been -- you know, I can't even -- I don't even want to -- I can't even think of a job, so I don't even want to guess. I want to take that off the record.
Q. Okay.
A. If I could pull it out of my head, I would. I shouldn't have said that. I'm sorry.
Q. Okay, what would you like stricken from the record? The comment about --
A. The last statement, yeah.
Q. -- about there being piping through a --
A. And I will go through the jobs and, if we have, I will let you know.
Q. Okay. So in your opinion, you normally never touch CenterPoint boundary piping, normally?
A. Normally, we don't.
MR. EVANS: Okay. No issues.
BY MR. PIERZINA:
Q. This is Brian Pierzina. I think you might've confused me or made a contradiction. I thought, Pat, that you had established that if you needed to cut into the customer's piping to do your tie-in and the shut-off valve upstream of the meter is the only

valve to shut off, that you would shut that valve off.
A. Correct.
Q. All right. And I think what you just stated says that you wouldn't do that, but I'm pretty sure that that's -- you had indicated --
A. Yeah, you would go the safest route and you would shut something off and --
MR. PIERZINA: All right. That's all I had.
MR. HOEPF: Well, that's a good point, Brian. I just --
MR. EVANS: Introduce.
BY MR. HOEPF:
Q. Oh, I'm sorry, this is Mike. I just -- yeah, just for some clarification here. My understanding is that to do this job, you would have to demo this meter right here, right, to get to the wall?
A. No.
Q. No?
A. No, because you could've tied in up -- this line could've come in and you could've tied in above the meter right here. But if there wasn't a shut-off, you probably would've shut that line off. But your tie-in was right here on the wall. We weren't tying in right here or here. We were tying in right here.
Q. Okay.
A. That's kind of what it was when I left.
MR. EVANS: Yeah.

MR. HOEPF: Okay, okay. I got you. Thanks for the clarification.

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. So this is one of those ones where it's kind of very eerie, in a way. When you look at how this is kind of divided up and you have this kind of CenterPoint piping all the way up this way, but that's the only available spot you have to do the work.

A. It might be the only one I've ever seen, to be honest with you.

Q. Like this?

A. It might be, but, you know, because I didn't take a -- you know, we looked at it. I can't verify if there was a valve here or not. I just don't remember. You know what I mean? I just don't. I just -- I've tried and tried to remember and I don't remember.

BY MR. BOWLES:

Q. This is Dan Bowles. Is there any doubt that that valve that we've talking about is a CenterPoint valve? It is a CenterPoint valve, right? Not Minnehaha?

A. Correct.

MR. EVANS: That's a CenterPoint valve, correct?

MR. BOLAND: Yes, it is.

BY MR. BOWLES:

Q. And I guess, now I don't understand. What's so unusual about the layout, maybe in 500 words or less?

A. Well, you know what, it's -- if the valve was parallel with this pipe, so running the same way as this handle, you would say that valve is open. When it's turned this way, it's off. So when you looked at it, it looked off. I thought it might be open.

MR. EVANS: Yes.

BY MR. HOEPF:

Q. Mike Hoepf. So just -- if we were going to, say, strictly following the rules strictly by the book, you were going to -- you know, were going to follow every rule ever written, would you have to call CenterPoint to get this valve shut off if you were going to demo this piece, because it's their valve?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. I mean, that would -- I imagine that would be pretty inefficient if you had to do that.

A. Yes. But just from the working relationship we have, we have shut off those valves in the past.

Q. Right, right.

A. And nothing's ever been said and, you know what, it's not --

Q. So Steven Kass would be qualified to shut off that valve below that meter, and Logan Kass would be qualified to carry the separated meter away, hypothetically speaking, if that was your valve. But technically speaking, if we were going to do everything by the book, CenterPoint would've had to have shut that valve off or shut the gas off at the street to do that work?

A. Yeah, but it looked like it was done.

MR. HOEPF: Okay, thanks for the clarification. I appreciate that.

MR. EVANS: This is Roger Evans. If CenterPoint had closed that -- I mean, if you contacted CenterPoint to close that valve, more than likely you wouldn't have done it, that's correct?

MR. JONES: This is Shane. Yeah, that's correct.

MR. EVANS: Because you would've said we're going to shut down all the gas to the building, is what you would've done, probably?

MR. JONES: That is correct.

MR. EVANS: That's all I have.

BY MR. JONES:

Q. This is Shane. I've got one more quick question. On a job like this, you stated earlier, this could've been a 3- to 4-day job because of the welding and putting the pieces together and all the coordinating and things. Is it uncommon to do -- I'll call it pre-work?

A. Yes, fabbing. Yeah.

Q. That's uncommon or it is common?

A. Oh, it's always common.

Q. Okay. And prefabbing would be -- give me an example if you're going to prefab something, what would you do?

A. Well, we would prefab from that meter as much as we can. We'd try to get all the way done inside to the building and tie it in. We try to get as much welded pipe done as possible so the day

of the shutdown we have a day's worth of work and not 3 days.

So you'd fab up your welded pieces and then you'd have one or two welds and -- you know, one you stuck through a wall or -- and then you do that weld on the inside or you would, you know, try to run a flange through the wall if you could get -- you know, if you Link-Seal would let the flange go through that hole. Because the Link-Seal adds -- you know, a 2-inch line would give you a 4-inch hole in the wall and you'd have a bigger line, maybe the flange would slide through so you could save a weld or -- but you'd try to get as much to the end project as you could.

Q. So is it fair to say the coordination of the end of the job or the tie-in is when everybody comes together and shuts the gas off and you finalize your tie-ins?

A. This job's final tie-in would've been on this pipe right here. It would've been done right there. That would've been the final one we should have had to do on that job.

Q. On the 2-inch?

A. Yep, that would've been the final one and you guys -- the boilers weren't use. Minnehaha said that they were shut down and turned off and --

Q. So with the interruptible meter, you would've still tried to tie it in without shutting the gas off?

A. The gas should've been -- it would've -- according to this plan, if there was no valve on that side -- if there was a valve on this side of the meter, that would've all been done. It

would've been tied in, done. But if that was the only valve there, we would've shut it and tied it in.

Q. Had you been into the boiler room?

A. Yes.

Q. Is there valves in there?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay.

A. I just -- I do not remember.

MR. JONES: Okay, thank you.

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. I have one last question, just thought of. When you did your walkthrough with the CenterPoint individual -- Alan?

A. Yeah.

Q. Was this valve discussed as far as the opening and close force part?

A. No.

Q. Okay. And was this valve ever considered to be a point where you would tie in?

A. No.

Q. During that conversation?

A. No. And you know what, I wasn't even -- I was just doing a take-off. It's not even -- you're just doing a take-off. You're just giving an estimate on the amount of pipe. You aren't doing the job, you aren't even -- you're just --

Q. Okay.

A. -- trying to get a material list so you can get a bid out the book.

MR. EVANS: Okay. Are we finished?

That completes the interview. Thank you very 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<br>MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA<br>AUGUST 2, 2017<br>Interview of Pat Boland |
| ACCIDENT NO.: | DCA17MP007 |
| PLACE: | Minneapolis, Minnesota |
| DATE: | August 7, 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.

David Martini
Transcriber

# National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Interviewee Name (please print): PAT BOLAND
PIPING SUPERINTENDANT

Organization: MMI

Date of Transcript Review: 10/27/17

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.

[redacted]

SIGNATURE

**NTSB Interview Transcript Correction for PAT BOLAND**

**Interview Taken: August 7, 2017**

| PAGE:LINE | NOW READS | SHOULD READ | REASONS FOR CHANGE |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6:19 | Yeah. No, I - - most | Yes. Most | Clarification. |
| 7:4 | Polk | Avoca | Misheard. |
| 7:7 | It was for the - - oh, what's the name of | It was for Northern Natural Gas. | Clarification. |
| 7:14 | slow, you know, and just - - our | slow, how our | Clarification. |
| 7:25 | would be - - we have | would be high for us we have | Clarification. |
| 8:5 | we had a man out | we had to man up | Misheard. |
| 10:20 | lifts and ladders | lifts than ladders | Misheard. |
| 20:23 | Yeah, we first sat out | Yeah, we first went out | Misspoke. |
| 24:20 | running through the wall | running along the wall | Clarification. |
| 26:12 | site | side | Misheard. |
| 30:8 | this in a central | this incident, at central | Misspoke/misheard |
| 51:22 | I | Someone | Misspoke. |
| 56:16 | No, that's - - | | Strike for clarity. |
| 61:2 | buildings | rooms | Misspoke. |
| 61:7 | to be - - and we do | to be the ones to do | Misspoke/misheard |
| 66:6 | Yeah. | Yeah, to the firm meter. | Clarification. |
| 67:8 | where you'd have needed your weld once | where your weld would be easier once | Clarification. |
| 69:7 | The valve was in the on position. | The firm meter valve was in the on position. | Clarify which meter. |
| 70:1 | I might walk out | As we walked out | Misspoke or misheard. |
| 71:3 | there's stops on it. | there's stops on it. I do not know what I saw, it just did not look right. | Clarification. |
| 77:1 | No, because I - - | I don't recall. | Clarification. |
| 90:8 | I just - - I do not remember. | | Strike for clarity. *See* 90:6, already stated, "yes". |

SIGNED: [redacted]

Pat Boland

11/1/17

Date