

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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HOUSE EXPLOSION IN FIRESTONE,
COLORADO, APRIL 17, 2017

* Accident No.: DCA17FP005

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Interview of: RON KERN

Frederick-Firestone Fire Protection
District Business & Education
Center
8426 Kosmerl Place
Longmont, Colorado

Saturday,
May 13, 2017

APPEARANCES:

RAVI CHHATRE, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

GBENGA AJIBOYE, General Engineer
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
(PHMSA)

MICHAEL LEONARD, Quality Assurance Professional
Colorado Oil & Gas Conservation Commission

DOUG PRUNK, Division Chief of Life Safety
Frederick-Firestone Fire Protection District

DAVID MCBRIDE, Vice President of Health, Safety &
Environment
Anadarko Petroleum Corporation

SEAN URVAN, Senior Counsel
Anadarko Petroleum
(On behalf of Mr. Kern)

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. CHHATRE: Good afternoon. Today is Saturday, May 13,
3 2017. We are currently at Frederick-Firestone Fire Protection
4 District's Business and Education Center, located at 8426 Kosmerl
5 Place, Longmont, Colorado. We are meeting regarding the
6 investigation of explosion of house located at 6312 Twilight
7 Avenue, Firestone, Colorado, that occurred on April 17, 2017.

8 My name is Ravi Chhatre. I am with the National
9 Transportation Safety Board located in Washington, DC., and I'm
10 investigator in charge for this accident. The NTSB investigation
11 number for this accident is DCA17FP005.

12 I would like to start by notifying everyone present in this
13 room that we are recording this interview, and we may transcribe
14 it at a later date. Transcripts will be provided directly to the
15 Interviewee for review and identifying any typographical errors.
16 The transcripts may be posted in NTSB's public docket.

17 Also, I would like to inform Mr. Ron Kern that you are
18 permitted to have one other person present with you during the
19 interview. This is a person of your choice, your supervisor,
20 friend, family member or if you choose, no one at all.

21 Please state for the record your full name, spelling of your
22 name, organization you work for and your title, your business
23 contact information such as mailing address, email address, postal
24 address, and whom you have chosen to be present with you during
25 your interview.

1 MR. KERN: I'm Ron Kern, K-e-r-n. I'm a foreman with
2 Anadarko Petroleum. Email?

3 MR. CHHATRE: Yes, sir.

4 MR. KERN: [REDACTED] is my email.

5 MR. CHHATRE: Phone number?

6 MR. KERN: [REDACTED].

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

8 MR. URVAN: Sean Urvan, S-e-a-n, Urvan, U-r-v-a-n.

9 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. I'm sorry. Thank you for that. Now
10 will you give me your title with the company?

11 MR. KERN: I'm a foreman.

12 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Thank you.

13 Now I'd like to go around and have each person introduce
14 themselves. Please state your name, spelling of your name, your
15 title and the organization that you represent and your business
16 contact information, starting from my left.

17 MR. AJIBOYE: I'm Gbenga Ajiboye, spelled G-b-e-n-g-a
18 A-j-i-b-o-y-a. I'm an engineer with U.S. DOT, PHMSA. My office
19 is in Lakewood. My contact number is [REDACTED], and my
20 email address is [REDACTED].

21 MR. LEONARD: Mike Leonard, first name common spelling, last
22 name L-e-o-n-a-r-d. I'm with the Colorado Oil and Gas
23 Conservation Commission, Quality Assurance Professional. My
24 email is [REDACTED]. Cell phone number
25 34 -- I'm sorry. Cell phone number [REDACTED].

1 MR. PRUNK: Doug Prunk, Frederick-Firestone Fire Protection
2 District, Division Chief of Life Safety. Last name is
3 P-r-u-n-k. Email is [REDACTED]. Phone number [REDACTED]
4 [REDACTED].

5 MR. URVAN: Sean Urvan. Again S-e-a-n U-r-v-a-n. Senior
6 counsel with Anadarko Petroleum Corporation. Phone number
7 [REDACTED], email [REDACTED].

8 MR. MCBRIDE: David McBride, Vice President, Health, Safety
9 and Environment for Anadarko Petroleum Corporation. It's
10 [REDACTED]. Phone number is [REDACTED].

11 MR. CHHATRE: Thank you for that.

12 INTERVIEW OF RON KERN

13 BY MR. CHHATRE:

14 Q. Mr. Kern, for the record, tell us your educational
15 background, formal, informal education, any training, how long you
16 have been with the company.

17 A. I've been with Anadarko for 21 years, been in the industry
18 for 27. 12 years of education.

19 Q. Okay. Any other experience? Anything else you want to add?
20 So tell me what is your current position?

21 A. Foreman.

22 Q. And how long you have been in that position?

23 A. Five years.

24 Q. And as a foreman, what are your responsibilities?

25 A. Overseeing 837 wells in my area group.

- 1 Q. What is this group called?
- 2 A. The N10s.
- 3 Q. Spell it for -- spell it --
- 4 A. N10s, N as in Nancy, one zero, 10.
- 5 Q. N10. Okay. Can you tell us what it includes?
- 6 A. Just the day-to-day production of oil and gas.
- 7 Q. Okay. So as supervisor, what do you do with your crew or
- 8 whoever report to you? I know you are responsible for 837 wells.
- 9 What part you are responsible for?
- 10 A. Well, like I said, the day-to-day, the day-to-day work.
- 11 Training. Just doing invoices, getting work done.
- 12 Q. Management.
- 13 A. Management, yeah, okay. Thank you.
- 14 Q. So when you say day-to-day production work so if something
- 15 goes wrong at a well, you get a call or somebody else below you
- 16 gets a call?
- 17 A. The chain of command generally is caller IOC first.
- 18 Q. And what IOC stands for?
- 19 A. Integrated Operational Center.
- 20 Q. Integrated Operational Center. Okay. And who reports the
- 21 problem to that IOC?
- 22 A. The one that discovered it, the field man.
- 23 Q. Field person?
- 24 A. Yes.
- 25 Q. And what is their title? Field person, field --

- 1 A. They're called operators.
- 2 Q. Field operators or just operators?
- 3 A. Just operator.
- 4 Q. Okay. And do they report to you directly or through
5 somebody?
- 6 A. To me. I have 14 direct reports.
- 7 Q. Okay. And all 14 are operators?
- 8 A. No. Two are what we call field coordinators.
- 9 Q. Okay.
- 10 A. And two are what we call rovers.
- 11 Q. And two are?
- 12 A. Rovers.
- 13 Q. What -- okay. And the remaining -- operators.
- 14 A. And the remaining 10 are operators, yes.
- 15 Q. Okay. If you can quickly tell me what the field coordinators
16 do.
- 17 A. Field coordinators are like one step below my position.
- 18 Q. Okay.
- 19 A. They -- if I'm unavailable, they're available to make
20 decisions.
- 21 Q. Okay.
- 22 A. Without, you know, if it's a big thing, then they, yeah, they
23 will come through me. But if it's just small day-to-day stuff
24 they have my blessing to take care of it.
- 25 Q. Okay. And what are rovers?

1 A. Rovers are the next step down. They are generally there to
2 troubleshoot, help their operators get through their day,
3 day-to-day business. They have a problem, they can't fix it, we
4 have 30-minute rule. If they can't get it fixed in 30 minutes,
5 the rover will come over and take care of it so the operator can
6 move on.

7 Q. Okay. So the first person who tries to correct the problem
8 is operator?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. If they cannot do it within 30 minutes, they call the rover
11 directly?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And then if rover cannot get things done, then they call you.
14 Is that correct?

15 A. If it's -- yeah. If it's something that needs my attention,
16 yes. But for the most part it generally stops there.

17 Q. Okay. Now are the rovers and coordinators, have they gone
18 through rank like were they operators --

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. -- before they became --

21 A. Yes. They start as --

22 Q. Before they're promoted?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. And who offers training to your operators? When you get a
25 new person, who trains them?

1 A. We have a, I guess they call it Vertical Group. We have a
2 start-up team, a team that when we get a new person in, they go to
3 this team. They go through a green hardhat training program.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Once they've completed that, then they are turned over to the
6 foreman group, whatever foreman group, and then we set them with
7 an experienced operator for further training.

8 Q. Now in the, I guess, chain of command, I didn't see anything
9 mentioned about foremen. What -- I mean I know first you then the
10 two field coordinators under you, and under them -- the total,
11 each has two or there are only two rovers? Rovers report directly
12 to you?

13 A. Yes. And so do field coordinators.

14 Q. Yes. And then there are operators.

15 A. Then there's --

16 Q. Where are the foremen? Who are the foremen?

17 A. There's four of us in the Vertical Group.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. And each foreman group has their own setup.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. The same thing I just explained.

22 Q. So if I'm a new employee, I come in, I'm hired as an
23 operator, so you are saying I have to go through a green?

24 A. Green hardhat is what we call it.

25 Q. Hardhat training. Okay.

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. So new hire automatically assigned to that.

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. And who runs, who runs that green hat training?

5 A. You want it by name?

6 Q. No, no, no.

7 A. Oh.

8 Q. The titles.

9 A. He's a foreman.

10 Q. Okay. So you --

11 A. He's the foreman of that startup group.

12 Q. Okay. So startup foreman is different than you are?

13 A. Than me, yes.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. So the startup foreman then will train personally or he

17 assigns somebody or how --

18 A. He has APC employees that do the training for him.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. So after the training is done then they bring it, assign to

22 you or somebody else?

23 A. To wherever, yes.

24 Q. Okay. And so how do you proceed with giving assignments?

25 Are the given assignments immediately or they actually have to go

1 through some other program?

2 A. They -- soon as I, soon as the foremen group gets them,
3 whoever they are sent with a mentor. It might be one guy, may be
4 several. Just depending with vacations, this and that.

5 Q. And who the mentors are? Are you the mentor or rover is a
6 mentor, field coordinator?

7 A. Field coordinators and rovers are our first mentors. We also
8 have qualified operators.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. That are mentors.

11 Q. So it's kind of flexible. It is not fixed step-by-step.

12 A. Right. Right.

13 Q. And what that person is supposed to be doing during this
14 training period? The person initially went through hardhat
15 program.

16 A. Right.

17 Q. Now you --

18 A. Now he's teaching them the day-to-day operations.

19 Q. And how long that --

20 A. Of operating --

21 Q. How long that happens?

22 A. It depends on the operator. Some guys get it real quick,
23 some guys it takes a little longer. It just depends.

24 Q. So now is there any operating procedure Anadarko has for all
25 these operators? The different procedure for an operator that you

1 go to a well, you shall do number 1, number 2, number 3, number 4
2 that all the (indiscernible) follow?
3 A. There is an SOP for --
4 Q. There is?
5 A. -- that, each -- for locations, yes.
6 Q. And that is developed by you for your wells or it is done by
7 somebody else for the entire company?
8 A. There's a group that got together, several people were in on
9 writing the SOP.
10 Q. And when was that done? When --
11 A. I --
12 Q. You do not know?
13 A. I don't know.
14 Q. Is there a protocol that says that SOP will be updated every
15 year or reviewed when -- I'm not even saying updated. But
16 reviewed when every year --
17 A. I don't know if it's written that it will be updated, but if
18 something comes up, then, yes, it is updated.
19 Q. Okay. And that updating program, how does that work? I mean
20 is it even circulated for comments or just --
21 A. Yes.
22 Q. -- somebody in the company just changes that?
23 A. No, no. It's up for comment.
24 Q. Are you the right person to tell me this procedure or you are
25 not right person?

1 A. No. I mean I, I know of it, but I can't quote it.

2 Q. So who is the right person to talk about training?

3 A. Boy --

4 Q. Is there a training group in the company?

5 A. I'm thinking.

6 Q. Well, take your time.

7 A. Yeah. I would, I would say probably somebody in our Safety
8 Department would be where you could ask that question.

9 Q. Okay. You have almost 20 plus years. Do you know any
10 training group that trains people or you do not know any group?

11 A. Well, the green hardhat, that's their beginning.

12 Q. Right.

13 A. Then they're sent to us, and we basically train them.
14 Whatever group they go to, whether that's operations, regulatory,
15 whatever, wherever they're needed, that group trains them in their
16 day-to-day operation.

17 Q. Okay. Are all wells pretty similar that anybody can train,
18 and the person can --

19 A. The verticals are all similar. The horizontals are
20 different.

21 Q. Okay. Different than vertical or different among themselves?

22 A. What's that?

23 Q. Different than vertical or different among -- like each well
24 in horizontal is different?

25 A. No. Just they operate different than a vertical well does.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. So where the person -- what is green hat? Do you know what
4 the green hat is?

5 A. That's just our group that we identify people in the field
6 with a green hardhat that they are new, and we keep an extra eye
7 on them to make sure they're safe and --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- doing -- if we see them doing something we don't like, we
10 can approach them or we -- any time approach them and ask them how
11 they're doing, you know, stuff like that.

12 Q. And do you?

13 A. I not so much because I don't get in the field too much, but,
14 yeah.

15 Q. No. When I say do you, I meant your staff with 837 wells,
16 does somebody do that at --

17 A. Anybody has that right to talk to a green hardhat, yes.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. I guess my question was does it happen? Do they --

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Now for your wells, do you have an operating state-by-state
25 procedures that you give to green hat employees since they are new

1 that --

2 A. Everyone has the SOP for whatever division they're in.

3 Q. Okay. And do you have an SOP for your division, written
4 document --

5 A. For vertical wells?

6 Q. Vertical, yeah.

7 A. Yes.

8 MR. CHHATRE: Can you make a note that we ought to get that,
9 and if you can find out who the training person is.

10 BY MR. CHHATRE:

11 Q. And how often you revise your written procedures?

12 A. Excuse me?

13 Q. How often you revise that procedure, whatever your written
14 SOP?

15 A. Do I read them or --

16 Q. No, no. Do you review them annually to update, upgrade, down
17 -- there may be circumstance that you may want to add, delete.

18 A. Right.

19 Q. Something comes out from the experience, prior experience,
20 that, hey, this is too cumbersome or how does that information get
21 translated from the field personnel to you and you back to field
22 personnel? I mean -

23 A. Right. I see what you're saying. When a question comes up,
24 that's when we review it.

25 Q. And when that (indiscernible) monthly meetings, weekly

1 meetings?

2 A. We have monthly tailgate safety meetings, yes.

3 Q. Okay. And that is attended by all your 16 --

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. -- 17 staff?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Now if somebody -- they're monthly, right?

8 A. They what?

9 Q. They're monthly.

10 A. Monthly, yes.

11 Q. And if somebody sees something that needs urgent attention,
12 is there a form that they can fill in or?

13 A. Generally it's just brought up in the room conversation.

14 Q. What I'm saying between your two monthly meetings if somebody
15 has something that --

16 A. Right. And they don't have to wait for the monthly meeting.

17 Q. That's what I --

18 A. If something comes up.

19 Q. What vehicle they have to convey that to you?

20 A. They come, they would come to me.

21 Q. You personally, but there's no form that they need to fill in
22 or something like that?

23 A. No.

24 Q. They can just come to you and --

25 A. Not that I'm aware of, no.

1 Q. Okay. And if that happens, then what do you do? If somebody
2 comes to you.

3 A. I go to my supervisor and present it to him, and then --

4 Q. It's --

5 A. -- gone down the line, yes.

6 Q. The well which is near the accident scene, was that in your
7 territory?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. What do you know about that well? Are you (indiscernible)?

10 A. No.

11 Q. You don't need to know on that. Just routine --

12 A. I, yeah, I know nothing about the well. I've never been to
13 the location.

14 Q. Okay. Now during your monthly meetings do you ask if they
15 have -- I mean there's a problem with a well, if (indiscernible)
16 operators that report to you do you -- does somebody say, hey,
17 let's talk about well number one today in this time, other wells
18 other times?

19 A. Well, on the well level, my engineer has what we call route
20 reviews with each operator once every 2 weeks.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Work out he has a route review about every day.

23 Q. Week. Okay.

24 A. But each operator rotates around about every 2 weeks. He
25 gives him a list of what he sees. The operator can bring him a

1 list of what he's seeing. They go over it. They come up with a
2 game plan. They, yeah.

3 Q. Your engineer is your rover or?

4 A. No. He's an engineer. His name is Mike Lee.

5 Q. Mike Lee?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. Okay. And how he's connected to your group?

8 A. He's the -- my N10 engineer.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Each foreman group has their own engineer.

11 Q. Their own engineer.

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Maybe that that's what I meant so.

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. Okay. And that person resolves any issue with all the wells
16 in your jurisdiction?

17 A. Right.

18 Q. Okay. What time you consider the person after your green hat
19 program that comes to your group? When do you completely totally
20 give him assignment by himself or herself?

21 A. Once his mentors are comfortable with him being in the field,
22 and once I interview him, and I'm comfortable with him being on
23 his own.

24 Q. That's the time he gets --

25 A. That's the time we give him, and that's not a set period of

1 time. That just --

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Whenever we are comfortable with him.

4 Q. You are comfortable.

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. What is typical period for that? And I realize it's based
7 upon the operator to operator.

8 A. Probably --

9 Q. But is there a minimum that you will not even consider giving
10 him his own route --

11 A. Right.

12 Q. -- for 3 months, 6 months, 2 years, whatever?

13 A. I would say probably around 2 to 3 months is the --

14 Q. Minimum.

15 A. -- minimum.

16 Q. And after that does somebody go and check on him randomly
17 just to make sure that --

18 A. Oh, yes. Oh, yes, yeah.

19 Q. Is it procedure-wise or just by, you know, by operating
20 style? I guess what I'm asking you is there a -- in your standard
21 operating procedure that is say that, okay, after this green hat
22 program, 2, 3 months before you can get your own route, if you
23 would -- that's correct?

24 A. Right, right.

25 Q. Then the person is still fairly new compared to 10, 20 years

1 experienced person.

2 A. Right.

3 Q. Then how do you cross-check? In your operating procedure
4 does it say that, okay, you got your own route, but randomly some
5 senior person will go and check after you to make sure you -- is
6 it that kind of operating protocol or?

7 A. It's pretty much just a team effort. I mean --

8 Q. Okay. But --

9 A. -- once his mentor turns him loose or we turn him loose, his
10 mentor doesn't just ignore him. I mean, we keep check on him,
11 yes.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. At all times.

14 Q. Okay. But that's, I mean, depends upon when the mentor has
15 time. There is no, I guess, what I'm asking is there a procedure
16 written down that, okay, up to next 6 months the mentor has to do
17 the random checks?

18 A. Not to my knowledge, no.

19 Q. Okay. I forget the name the person who --

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Heideman.

21 MR. CHHATRE: Steven Heideman, yes.

22 BY MR. CHHATRE:

23 Q. Do you know this particular operator?

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Steven Heideman.

25 MR. KERN: Is he a good operator?

1 BY MR. CHHATRE:

2 Q. No, no. Do you just, do you --

3 A. Do I know him?

4 Q. Yes.

5 A. I know him, yes.

6 Q. Okay. And was he even -- was he randomly checked after he
7 was given his own route?

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. And by whom?

10 A. By whoever. Whoever is mentoring in that area. My area is
11 22 miles north to south, so I have it broke into two parts, north
12 and south. So it would have been my south people that --

13 Q. Okay. And that is why you are, I guess, staffed by two field
14 coordinators and two rovers, one for each?

15 A. One is north, one is south, right. Yeah.

16 Q. All right, okay. As a supervisor, have you heard any
17 problems, any issues with this particular well, number 14?

18 A. No. No.

19 Q. You have a lot of well, 837 wells. How you -- they're all
20 vertical or they are mixed?

21 A. Yes, they are all vertical.

22 Q. Have you heard any issue with any of your wells about leaks
23 or failures or something like that? And I'm --

24 A. To this, to this --

25 Q. -- about this area, in this area.

1 A. No. I haven't heard of any in this area, no.

2 Q. Any leak issues with your wells?

3 A. In general?

4 Q. In general, yeah. I mean, how do you -- I guess what I'm
5 asking you how do you document issue with one of your wells?
6 Either some component failing frequently or some, you know, some
7 -- the well leaked and --

8 A. Well, let's go back to the route reviews.

9 Q. Okay, yeah.

10 A. You have a route well that's running fine, and all of a
11 sudden it starts having issues. That's when we start looking into
12 it. Most of the time it's down hole issues. It's when the
13 engineer and the operator are looking at them. If it's surface
14 issues, then rovers, leads start looking into it.

15 Q. Okay. And if that happens, who -- is generating paperwork?

16 A. Work orders, if work needs to be done. But just a -- me
17 talking to my operator, no.

18 Q. No. Okay. What if the operator is doing something wrong and
19 the rover corrects it and say, hey, no, you did this wrong. This
20 is the way you need to do. Does that get documented?

21 A. No.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. No.

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

25 MR. KERN: Okay.

1 BY MR. AJIBOYE:

2 Q. Yeah, this is Gbenga from PHMSA. So I -- how does the
3 construction foreman how do they interact with you? Do you guys
4 have any direct relationship?

5 A. Yes. Yes.

6 Q. Can you explain that?

7 A. If we encounter a surface problem, surface equipment,
8 whatever, I will be notified of it. I will create a work order.
9 It will go to him, and his group will take care of the problem.

10 Q. So how likely is it for a construction foreman to have
11 contacts with the products that is being produced in a particular
12 well? Is that something that happens?

13 A. The product? ■

14 Q. Yeah. Do they have any kind of contact with it? Would there
15 be a reason why they would have contact with the products in the
16 well?

17 A. If it's a flow line issue, then, yes, there is product in the
18 line.

19 Q. So will a construction foreman probably come across a smell?

20 A. Well, if a leak is discovered, if a flow line fails, then we
21 have our regulatory group will go out and check the area for
22 hydrocarbons.

23 Q. So you've been with Anadarko for 20 years like you say, but
24 have you ever had any kind of direct contact with any product?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. So say does it leak from (indiscernible) can you describe
2 what that will smell like to you from your experience?

3 A. It smells like oil.

4 Q. Does it smell like mercaptan?

5 A. What's mercaptan? Oh, the stuff they put in the gas line,
6 no.

7 Q. Probably you can -- your construction foreman should be able
8 to differentiate, right, between --

9 A. Oh, yes.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Yes.

12 MR. AJIBOYE: Okay, so and that's my questions for now.

13 That's all the questions I would --

14 MR. LEONARD: Mike Leonard for (indiscernible).

15 BY MR. LEONARD:

16 Q. So green hats include contractors, right?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. Okay. How long usually does that green hat program last?

19 A. Again, that depends on the operator, how quick he's getting
20 through the tests, the procedures --

21 Q. Sure.

22 A. -- the field work.

23 Q. So give me -- can you give me a range? I mean, shortest to
24 longest maybe, in your experience?

25 A. I would say since the first of the year, when we really

1 started bringing a lot of them in, a month.

2 Q. A month in the green hat program?

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. That's kind of an average. So not everybody --

5 A. Not everybody, no. That's a --

6 Q. Because some people are --

7 A. -- a very rough number. Yes.

8 Q. Okay. So I know -- and then you said you mentor them for 2
9 to 3 months. Would you happen to know who -- because Steven
10 Heideman eventually took this route over. Would you happen to
11 know who mentored him?

12 A. Curtis Harvey.

13 Q. Curtis Harvey. Okay. All right. So would you say that the
14 training is consistent from person-to-person within the groups,
15 that it's a fairly standard --

16 A. It's a fairly standard operation, yes.

17 Q. Okay. And so -- and you, obviously, you've had experience
18 working up as operator through the ranks. So if I showed you some
19 production records you could maybe give me some ideas what a -- if
20 there was a problem? I mean just some -- because these are really
21 basic records.

22 A. Right.

23 Q. So these are the day-to-day records for the last two wells
24 -- last two wells, sorry. For the last 2 years of the well in
25 question, and all it has is the date the MCF reported, oil

1 production, water production and then the casing pressure, okay.
2 So in it -- and I'll just tell you now, in it all of 2016 it's
3 zeros.

4 A. Yeah, that was my understanding.

5 Q. Yeah. The well was --

6 A. Was shut in.

7 Q. -- shut in.

8 A. Right.

9 Q. But what I'd like you to look at is so from -- can you tell
10 me the day the well came back on?

11 A. No. Oh, you mean by looking at this?

12 Q. Yeah, but looking, just by looking at that, that's --

13 A. I would say the 31st.

14 Q. The 31st. Could you --

15 A. I mean the 30th, I guess.

16 Q. Okay. So can we -- does --

17 MR. CHHATRE: 30th of what?

18 MR. LEONARD: January.

19 MR. CHHATRE: January.

20 MR. LEONARD: Yeah.

21 BY MR. LEONARD:

22 Q. Does it -- I mean based on the casing and the production
23 records it looks like that well was relatively stable.

24 A. It looks like it goes down there a few days for whatever
25 reason, but --

1 Q. I mean you're saying the casing pressure goes down --

2 A. Well, the MCF. It's --

3 Q. Yeah, so it's --

4 A. -- pretty consistent, then it drops for a day or two, then
5 it's consistent, then it drops so.

6 Q. Would that be consistent with an older well?

7 A. Yes. Especially with line pressure in this area.

8 Q. Yeah, line pressure in that area. Okay. So if we could flip
9 over and go to April 1st.

10 A. Okay.

11 Q. Is there a substantial, something substantial there? I mean
12 something, a big change?

13 A. Yes.

14 MR. LEONARD: Do you want to see this?

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: If you can just give me
16 (indiscernible).

17 MR. LEONARD: Yeah.

18 BY MR. LEONARD:

19 Q. So April 1st, I mean, we can say that the average pressure
20 was somewhere around 10, 12, until April 1st, and then it really
21 dropped off. Any ideas why that -- I mean, just all the possible
22 reasons why that could have happened.

23 A. Line pressure.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Automation issues.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. I would, just by looking at that, running consistent as it
3 did and then all of a sudden went off, I'd say either line
4 pressure or automation issues were the big reasons.

5 Q. Okay. So how --

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Just to be clear for the record, which
7 column are you talking about? Because I --

8 (Simultaneous comments.)

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- the MCF column.

10 MR. LEONARD: Well, the MCF, the production. And then to
11 relate to that the casing pressures. I mean because the casing
12 pressure cycles up and down.

13 BY MR. LEONARD:

14 Q. So what would, I mean, and again I understand this is an
15 older well, what would typically be done to overcome that problem?

16 A. Line pressure, nothing, I mean.

17 Q. So you wouldn't shuttle oil in for a period of time and then
18 try to bring it back on?

19 A. Well, if it exceeds what the well can do there's not much we
20 can do about it.

21 Q. And we don't know what that is because we don't have tubing
22 pressures.

23 A. Right, right.

24 Q. Okay. But it appears that there's been some sporadic
25 production there.

1 A. After the first?

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. That's what I said, very little MCF. So my first guess is
4 that it's a line pressure issue because you are getting a little
5 bit of production, but very little.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. And that's just speculation on my part. I don't --

8 Q. Yeah, I understand.

9 A. -- don't know the reason.

10 Q. We're looking at half the --

11 A. Right.

12 Q. But I mean, just looking at the production reports, there's
13 an obvious change. We need to kind of get an idea of why. I
14 think we need to get kind of an idea of why there was a change.

15 MR. CHHATRE: And just for the record for the transcripts,
16 can you tell what the MCF stands for and how many million cubic
17 feet or whatever the thing is?

18 MR. KERN: Million cubic feet.

19 MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

20 MR. KERN: Or is it measured cubic feet?

21 MR. LEONARD: No, that's million cubic feet.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Million.

23 MR. CHHATRE: MCF, I just want to make sure.

24 MR. LEONARD: Sure. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. I was just trying
25 to figure out what some of the possible causes can be.

1 MR. MCBRIDE: You might want to check that MCF. This is Dave
2 McBride. I think that MCS is thousands of cubic feet.

3 MR. LEONARD: Thousands of cubic feet.

4 MR. MCBRIDE: MMCF is --

5 (Simultaneous comments.)

6 MR. LEONARD: You're right. I'm sorry.

7 BY MR. LEONARD:

8 Q. So it's not a real big producer well?

9 A. No. It's an older well.

10 Q. Yeah.

11 MR. LEONARD: All right, that's all I have for now.

12 Thanks.

13 MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

14 MR. PRUNK: Doug Prunk, Fire Department.

15 BY MR. PRUNK:

16 Q. Mr. Kern, around the 11th and 12th of April on this, we are
17 -- even starting around the 6th, we're at zeros, and we talked
18 about maybe line pressure would be from my explanation from what
19 I've known only in the last month worth of dealing with this, that
20 would be our, this case our midstream pipe has higher pressure,
21 right?

22 A. Right.

23 Q. So we can't -- it can't push against the pipe that it's
24 supposed to be going in, so basically we shut it off, right?

25 Around the 12th, the 11th and 12th, we have one reading. What

1 would that -- what's that indicate? What do you think? Did
2 we --

3 A. If I had to guess, I would say the well attempted to run.

4 Q. Okay. And then how is this, we call it automation. I know
5 that's kind of a general term for all this stuff that opens the
6 valves, and we do that, we can either do it manually or they're
7 set to do themselves somehow.

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Did you -- you may or may not have known that this was put
10 into a manual mode.

11 A. I don't know if it was.

12 Q. Yeah, that's fine based on we haven't got to that yet. But
13 knowing some data was based on it was maybe having problems at a
14 lower level than yours, you know, the -- your two field men were
15 working on stuff, and it was put into a manual mode. If it was in
16 the manual mode during that period of time, can that automatically
17 release like that?

18 A. Automation has malfunctioned before, yes, and will
19 erroneously open up.

20 Q. So, okay. As far as data of this, how often -- when does
21 this report -- report to the report is what I mean. So everything
22 is all dated at midnight on those dates. Does it look forward or
23 backwards or how is this -- what does 7 indicate, that it flowed
24 on the 12th or the 13th or --

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Or the 11th.

1 BY MR. PRUNK:

2 Q. The 11th or like how does that -- is it in the rears? I
3 just --

4 A. I don't know when the contract date is. There's a contract
5 date that closes every day. So from that point backwards is the
6 previous days accounting.

7 Q. So any of the wells would always have this same zero hundred
8 number at the front of it, probably? So I mean just --

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. And every well has a different contract date just based on
11 how it was set up, when it was turned out or?

12 A. Well, no. I'm not -- and I'm not the one to speak on this,
13 but I know Anadarko has a different closing date. DCP has a
14 different closing time.

15 Q. Okay. Would this well have that date or would we know that
16 or is all of Anadarko closing time a certain time or is it this
17 well?

18 MR. MCBRIDE: I think just to help clarify a little bit, Ron,
19 I think --

20 MR. CHHATRE: Identify

21 MR. MCBRIDE: This is David McBride. I think just to help
22 clarify, we could probably look into that for you, Doug, but I
23 think what Ron's trying to say is it depends on the contract for
24 the gas, the people that are buying the gas from who we're
25 accounting with. So if we're selling into our own system we have

1 a contract closing date. If we're selling into DCP's system, they
2 have a contract closing date. And I think that would probably
3 drive the time stamp that the accumulation would start and stop.

4 MR. PRUNK: Okay.

5 MR. MCBRIDE: Is that what you --

6 MR. KERN: Yes, that's what I was trying to say, yeah.

7 MR. MCBRIDE: And we need to just talk to our marketing
8 people and be able to get the contract date for this well and who
9 we're selling into.

10 MR. PRUNK: Okay.

11 MR. MCBRIDE: And I don't know the answer to that here, but
12 we can look for that.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I have a follow-up question if
14 possible. Are you --

15 MR. CHHATRE: Let him finish. I (indiscernible).

16 MR. PRUNK: Yeah, we can talk about that just as a curiosity
17 because we know that there was activity at the well around those
18 times, and I wanted to make sure that as part of my investigation
19 it wasn't a -- I'm putting a gas movement on the wrong date based
20 on just the time stamp that's a generic time stamp. So that's how
21 I wanted to know what the cut-off date of this is. All right.

22 MR. CHHATRE: So I guess, if I hear you then you want
23 -- this is Ravi -- that you want the information from --

24 MR. PRUNK: Yes, as we had discussed, yeah.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And that's the -- what record are you

1 looking at?

2 MR. PRUNK: This is the -- these are the production records.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Is it the left-hand column?

4 MR. PRUNK: No. It would be the right-hand column on the
5 12th.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's your left.

7 MR. PRUNK: Oh, left-hand column. My other left.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay, here, see it?

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

10 MR. CHHATRE: So are you --

11 MR. PRUNK: Couple more quick questions.

12 MR. CHHATRE: No, no, go ahead. I just want to make sure.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did you make a note that you want to
14 do that?

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Got it.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

17 BY MR. PRUNK:

18 Q. So we talked about 10 operators, two rovers, and two field
19 coordinators. The -- just so I have an understanding of the rank
20 structure. You're over all of them, obviously. The field
21 coordinator is the next below you?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Are they on the same tier as rovers? Are they -- do
24 they --

25 A. They're a step above the rovers.

1 Q. So they do -- so a rover has to answer to a field coordinator
2 and then they answer to you?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Okay. And then operators are the lowest of that.

5 A. Lower.

6 Q. Of the (indiscernible) lowest underneath --

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Senior and (indiscernible). Do they -- I mean, I would hope
9 not for all of us, but use rank structure, do they ever, do
10 operators ever talk directly to you --

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. -- about a problem?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. That's common? Okay. But not a individual well thing or in
15 general they would? Just anything. If it was kind of like if
16 they saw you, hey, we had problems with this well?

17 A. Right, yeah.

18 Q. Okay. How many -- these are all Anadarko employees?

19 A. No.

20 Q. Okay. How many are? Can you tell me what that breakout
21 would be?

22 A. I have four APC employees and the rest are contractors.

23 Q. And what rank are the APC employees?

24 A. The two field coordinators are APC. One rover is APC, the
25 other one is a contractor. One operator is a APC employee. The

1 rest are contractors.

2 Q. Okay. Maybe I was doing it backwards. I'm sorry. APC is
3 Anadarko?

4 A. Anadarko.

5 Q. Okay. I was like thinking that there's been a lot of
6 acronyms in the last couple weeks. I apologize.

7 A. So two Anadarko employees are foremen -- are field
8 coordinators. Two Anadarko employees are field coordinators.

9 Q. Okay. And then --

10 A. One Anadarko employee is a rover.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. The other one is a contractor

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. One Anadarko employee is a operator, the rest are
15 contractors.

16 Q. All right. All right. So nine operators are contractors?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. And one of your rovers.

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And they're all from the same contract? We have contract
21 employees in my business as well, and they're not like they don't
22 work for another company, right. We just call them contract
23 employers because they're basically on a contingency type
24 situation. So are your contract employers (verbatim) do they come
25 from almost like a -- I don't know how to -- like a subcontractor

- 1 group or are these all --
- 2 A. Yes. They are --
- 3 Q. -- people that just --
- 4 A. -- employed by another outfit.
- 5 Q. And they all are employed by the same company?
- 6 A. No.
- 7 Q. Okay. So when you get them back to the green hard hat
8 situation, is that a it doesn't matter where they come from, they
9 all go through the same process --
- 10 A. Correct.
- 11 Q. -- of training and --
- 12 A. Field experience, whatever, doesn't matter, no.
- 13 Q. Doesn't matter their field experience.
- 14 A. They go through a green hardhat.
- 15 Q. Okay. So the first step -- is green hardhat because I kind
16 of caught it as two different things at first. I almost
17 taught (verbatim) it or thought I heard that it was almost like a
18 instructional phase and then a field instruction phase. Does that
19 sound, is that correct? Is there like a classroom portion at the
20 beginning --
- 21 A. Yes.
- 22 Q. -- for all of them no matter if they've been a pumper for
23 somebody else for 5 years.
- 24 A. Yes.
- 25 Q. They go through Anadarko's --

1 A. Process, yes.

2 Q. Okay. And then they come out. And only the field internship
3 is based on how well they do.

4 A. Well, not how well they do. Once they complete it. You have
5 to complete the green hardhat before you can go to the field.

6 Q. Right. So it is kind of two different things, but then they
7 wear the green hardhat until they're done with field instruction.
8 Does that sound right?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Okay. So but the classroom portion is a fixed time like 5
11 weeks, 2 weeks, whatever?

12 A. Not necessarily.

13 Q. So they can graduate out of it, out of the classroom portion
14 as well?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. They have to do complete green hardhat training.

18 Q. So that would be the advantage if you had pumper experience
19 with a different area -- I call them department, sorry, different
20 company. They could maybe field test out of stuff --

21 A. Probably.

22 Q. -- showing that they're proficient.

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Yes.

1 MR. PRUNK: That's all I got for now. Thank you.

2 MR. CHHATRE: Okay, any --

3 MR. LEONARD: Yeah, just a quick follow-up. This is Mike
4 Leonard.

5 BY MR. LEONARD:

6 Q. So when you take a well out of automation, out of automatic,
7 and put it into manual, is it typical -- is that just taking the
8 computer portion out or are valves closed?

9 A. Just the computer part.

10 Q. Just the computer. So the valves --

11 A. And that could be an erroneous. We often get erroneous
12 production.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. When we know it's not on, with valves shut, and we will show
15 production.

16 MR. LEONARD: Have that paper? Would it -- no, he's got it
17 right there.

18 BY MR. LEONARD:

19 Q. So, yeah, you say it's erroneous production, but would that
20 also, I mean, can you explain to me why if it's erroneous
21 production why the casing pressure drop?

22 A. That there looks like that would have been production because
23 it dropped about approximately 10 pounds.

24 Q. Yeah, that's -- and that's pretty consistent with everything
25 else, right?

1 A. Right.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. Yeah, so I, yeah, but I just wanted to be clear. I didn't
5 know if you went to -- when you went into manual if you --

6 A. No, no valves are not shut.

7 MR. LEONARD: Okay. All right, that's all I have.

8 MR. MCBRIDE: Yeah, Ron, I have just one follow-up question.

9 MR. CHHATRE: Introduce yourself.

10 MR. MCBRIDE: Yeah, it's David McBride.

11 BY MR. MCBRIDE:

12 Q. Just to go back to the smells question that -- asked before,
13 you don't have any personal knowledge about how well your foreman,
14 your construction foreman either smells or doesn't smell.

15 A. No.

16 Q. Is that correct?

17 A. No.

18 MR. MCBRIDE: Okay. Thank you. That's all I have.

19 BY MR. CHHATRE:

20 Q. Want to go back to this table again (indiscernible) I
21 understand. I don't -- I see how many thousand cubic feet of gas,
22 I guess, is coming out of the well, but I don't see any data at
23 all for water or hydrocarbons. Can you explain -- there has to be
24 some logic for it (indiscernible) understand.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Are those even on there?

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, water, oil, water are on there.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: When I say it has -- and I don't know
3 this so I can't tell you definite. If automation on it is well
4 head only, you won't see tank gauges.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay, so just to be clear as I go back
6 to 2013, 2015, so it does show oil production, but it is very
7 minimal.

8 MR. CHHATRE: But I don't see any water. I mean I can
9 understand maybe be or may not be, but if it's a wet well, I would
10 expect some water numbers in there. If not, then why not? I
11 didn't understand.

12 MR. KERN: Just a very old well that has trouble running so
13 it's not -- low production, I guess.

14 MR. CHHATRE: If you can, there's no emergency on this, but
15 if you can easily find out what the numbers (indiscernible) why
16 I'm not seeing any water on that, numbers no this one.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: There is no water produced --

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can I ask a question?

19 MR. CHHATRE: No, the gas will -- it's a (indiscernible) gas,
20 right.

21 (Simultaneous comments.)

22 MR. LEONARD: This is Mike Leonard. Wet gas does not -- the
23 term wet does not imply water.

24 MR. CHHATRE: No. (Indiscernible) water vapor.

25 MR. LEONARD: No, no.

1 MR. CHHATRE: Then what does it mean?

2 MR. LEONARD: No, wet in oil and gas industry wet implies
3 fluid, which could be oil and/or water.

4 MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

5 MR. LEONARD: So these formations are not water wet. They
6 are oil wet.

7 MR. CHHATRE: Oil wet.

8 MR. LEONARD: Yes, sir.

9 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Thanks for the clarification.

10 MR. LEONARD: Yes, sir.

11 MR. CHHATRE: That's what I'm trying to find out because I
12 thought wet will imply some moisture, and then you -- down to the
13 bottom that says --

14 MR. LEONARD: Total barrels.

15 MR. CHHATRE: Total barrels, yeah.

16 MR. LEONARD: Yeah, and if you look back, so when you review
17 these 2 years, I don't know if this well ever made any water.

18 MR. CHHATRE: No, I understand. It makes sense, and I'm good
19 with that actually.

20 MR. LEONARD: There's a possibility on this that the water
21 tank may not be automated so it would not show up on these
22 reports.

23 MR. CHHATRE: Oh, I see. Okay.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And I have one more follow-up if I
25 could before you start. Are you --

1 MR. CHHATRE: No, I'm done.

2 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

3 Q. Okay. This, we've said that this is a low producer. What in
4 your field or your area, your region, what's a top end production
5 number that you see out of your better wells? Thousands?

6 A. No, God no. We talking oil or we talking gas?

7 Q. Just, no just gas, just comparison between this well and
8 another well.

9 A. In this area down here, which I don't know very well, I would
10 say on average ballpark guess would be 50 MCF would be a better
11 well.

12 Q. So it's about half of a good well or give or take or less,
13 right? 25 percent would be low?

14 A. Right.

15 Q. Okay. As part of your region, do you keep, I mean, are you
16 -- do you build reports of data and stuff for to say these are
17 good wells and bad wells or are you on any part of the -- you
18 don't have anything to do --

19 A. No, I have, no that's --

20 Q. -- with shutting in a well or plugging wells.

21 A. No. that's --

22 Q. Or anything like that.

23 A. That's all --

24 Q. Or recommendation.

25 A. That's all engineering.

1 Q. Okay. And speaking of the engineering, just a question just
2 does the -- in the structure is the engineer lateral to you or
3 does the engineer answer to you or is he --

4 A. We're pretty much equal, I would say.

5 Q. Yeah, just, that was just totally just wanted to know how
6 they -- so the engineer would be the one that would make the
7 decision whether or not a well should be -- or would make the
8 recommendations.

9 A. He would start the movement of it.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All right, thank you.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No other questions.

12 MR. CHHATRE: No questions. Okay.

13 Thank you very much for spending weekend with us.

14 MR. KERN: Okay.

15 MR. CHHATRE: I appreciate your help.

16 Off the record.

17 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


IN THE MATTER OF: HOUSE EXPLOSION IN FIRESTONE,
 COLORADO, APRIL 17, 2017
 Interview of Ron Kern

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA17FP005

PLACE: Longmont, Colorado

DATE: May 13, 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.



Katherine Motley
Transcriber