

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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ALABAMA GAS CORPORATION (ALAGASCO) *

NATURAL GAS LEAK WITH IGNITION *

Docket No.: DCA-14-MP-001

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA *

DECEMBER 17, 2013 *

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Interview of: LEE HENDERSON

Alagasco Center for Energy
Technology
Birmingham, Alabama

Saturday,
December 21, 2013

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: MATTHEW NICHOLSON
Investigator-in-Charge

APPEARANCES:

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KEITH BLACKWOOD, Pipeline Safety Investigator
Alabama Public Service Commission

MICHAEL BELL
(Representative on behalf of Mr. Henderson)

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. NICHOLSON: Good afternoon. Today is Saturday,
3 December 21st, 2013. My name is Matthew Nicholson, and I am an
4 investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board in
5 Washington, D.C. We are currently in Birmingham, Alabama, at the
6 Alagasco Center for Energy Technology, investigating the
7 Birmingham, Alabama natural gas leak with ignition which occurred
8 on December 17th, 2013. This is case number DCA-14-MP-001. We're
9 here today to interview Lee Henderson.

10 For the record, Lee, would you please state your first
11 and last name with spelling?

12 MR. HENDERSON: Lee Henderson, L-e-e, H-e-n-d-e-r-s-o-n.

13 MR. NICHOLSON: Thanks. And if you would, please state
14 for the record your title, employer, and a business e-mail or a
15 phone number?

16 MR. HENDERSON: Employer is Alabama Gas. I am
17 superintendent system integrity.

18 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. And maybe an e-mail, business e-
19 mail?

20 MR. HENDERSON: Lee -- L-e-e -- . **PII**

21 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. Lee, you're allowed to have one
22 person of your choosing to be present for these interviews. Can
23 you please indicate for the record who you have chosen to be your
24 representative?

25 MR. HENDERSON: Mike Bell.

1 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. And we'll now go around the room
2 and introduce ourselves for the record. My name's Matthew
3 Nicholson, NTSB investigator.

4 MR. CHHATRE: Ravi Chhatre, NTSB accident investigator.

5 MR. BELL: Mike Bell for Lee Henderson.

6 MR. WILLIAMS: Will Williams, Fire Investigations, City
7 of Birmingham.

8 MR. GARDNER: Bob Gardner, Alabama Gas.

9 MR. BLACKWOOD: Keith Blackwood, Alabama Public Service
10 Commission.

11 MR. JONES: Wallace Jones, Alabama Public Service
12 Commission.

13 INTERVIEW OF LEE HENDERSON

14 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

15 Q. Okay. Lee, just to begin with, maybe if you could walk
16 us through when you hired on to Alagasco and the positions you've
17 held from that time of hire till now maybe?

18 A. My hired-on date was January -- sorry, March 10th, 1981.
19 I started out as a crewman, construction crewman. From there, I
20 became an assistant to -- at that time it was called a leaderman.
21 And from a leaderman, I became an operator; and from an operator,
22 I became a supervisor; and from a supervisor to a superintendent.

23 Q. Okay. And that's -- but you're a superintendent of
24 integrity services?

25 A. System integrity.

1 Q. System integrity, which is in the construction group
2 then?

3 A. Correct.

4 Q. Okay. So you've been in the construction group your
5 whole time. Okay. And can you talk a little bit, what does
6 integrity services involve in the pipeline? What does that --
7 what do you guys do?

8 A. We basically keep up the operations and maintenance of
9 our gas line system, keep it in good operating conditions. We do
10 repairs when needed, do company surveys.

11 Q. Are we talking about -- these are the leak surveys?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Okay. And how do the leak surveys occur? You're
14 dispatched on that, or which lines get surveyed?

15 A. Well, we have a system already in place that cover
16 surveys on a monthly and 6 months and annual basis. And we make
17 sure that they get done within that required time.

18 Q. So some get a monthly check, some get a 6-month, and
19 some get an annual; is that correct?

20 A. Correct.

21 Q. Okay. And we've heard before that there's a third
22 party, Southern Cross --

23 A. Southern Cross.

24 Q. -- that also does this. Do you manage that as well?

25 A. No, I don't.

1 Q. Okay. So you're just strictly internal?

2 A. Strictly internal.

3 Q. Okay. And the surveys that you perform, are these --
4 how is that done? What are you using to do the surveys?

5 A. Well, we have two survey teams, two-man teams, and they
6 survey the critical -- they call it critical areas that's required
7 for us to survey. And --

8 MR. GARDNER: Excuse me, Lee. Can I interject, please?

9 MR. NICHOLSON: Certainly. This is Bob.

10 MR. GARDNER: We call it critical area, but it's the
11 equivalent of what the 192 regulation refers to as business
12 district. So we call it a critical area survey, but it is
13 described in 192 as a business district survey.

14 MR. CHHATRE: Business district.

15 MR. GARDNER: Right.

16 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

17 Q. Okay. So it's two survey teams of two men; is that what
18 you said?

19 A. Correct.

20 Q. Okay, that survey these critical areas. Okay. And then
21 that was my next question. So a critical area as already defined
22 under 192?

23 MR. GARDNER: To be specific, critical area is not
24 defined in 192. Business district --

25 MR. NICHOLSON: I'm sorry.

1 MR. GARDNER: -- is what's defined in 192.

2 MR. NICHOLSON: Business district.

3 MR. GARDNER: I just want to make sure you --

4 MR. NICHOLSON: Yes, I appreciate that.

5 MR. GARDNER: -- we just happen to use that nomenclature,
6 but it's stated in our procedure that we say certain mains have
7 been designated as being in a critical area and we have business
8 district as the code names. It's intended to be the same; it's
9 just what our company --

10 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

11 MR. GARDNER: -- has traditionally referred -- we have
12 traditionally referred to the business district survey required in
13 192 as a critical area survey.

14 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. Is it the only criteria for a
15 critical area or does Alagasco have another --

16 MR. GARDNER: It's generally the criteria -- there's not
17 a specific -- and to be even more specific, there's not a direct
18 definition of what a business district is in 192, but it's what I
19 described earlier as areas we designate based on what we --

20 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. You have your own internal
21 definition?

22 MR. GARDNER: Right. Each gas company determines their
23 own business districts and, therefore, there's some surveys that
24 are required for that.

25 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

1 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

2 Q. So was this Gate City area, would this have been a
3 critical area for your teams?

4 A. Oh, the Gate City area, no.

5 Q. No. Okay. So, we brought you in today because you've
6 had some involvement, I guess, with the accident on December 17th.
7 If you could, please, just kind of walk us through that day and
8 how you got involved, how you were notified?

9 A. Well, started --

10 Q. What you did.

11 A. -- started the day out, I received a call somewhere
12 between 5 and 5:15 from one of the supervisors already on site.

13 Q. Who was that?

14 A. Chris Hill.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. And he was just alerting me of what I was getting ready
17 to get involved in, because I was getting ready to start my normal
18 day.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And he gave me a call to give me the heads up what was
21 going on. And so I immediately finished getting ready and I
22 headed straight to the scene.

23 After getting there, I -- two of the supervisors that I
24 help oversee was already on the scene.

25 Q. Who were they?

1 A. Which was Rob Wall and Bill Roberson.

2 Q. Can you spell that last name? I'm sorry.

3 A. R-o-b-e-r-s-o-n.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. So I immediately touched bases with them when I arrived
6 on site to see -- find out what was going on and what was the
7 extent of what was already done. I was informed that they had
8 been bar testing already. And, you know, this is in the midst of
9 all of the other stuff that was going on, you know, out there,
10 seeing what had happened. They was already in the process of bar
11 testing and checking for leaks. And after receiving the
12 information from them, they did determine that there was a spread
13 of gas in the area of that big tree at the corner.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. So we -- go ahead.

16 Q. Yeah. I just want to back up a little bit. So when you
17 arrived on scene, was the fire already out at the meter?

18 A. The fire was already out.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. There was some smothering --

21 Q. Yeah, okay.

22 A. -- of the rubbish and the fire department was still kind
23 of wetting it down, but the fire itself was pretty much already
24 out when I got on scene.

25 Q. Okay. And the Alagasco personnel on site were in the

1 process of bar hole testing or they had completed the bar hole
2 testing?

3 A. They were still in the process.

4 Q. Okay. All right. And that -- you talked to Rob Wall
5 and Bill Roberson. They indicated to you that there was a spread
6 of gas towards, you said, the tree?

7 A. Well, in the area of the tree.

8 Q. In that area of the tree. Okay. Did they talk about
9 what kind of values they were getting off -- what kind of readings
10 they were receiving?

11 A. They made some comments that they had some percentages
12 of gas. I think it was anywhere from 40, 50, 60, you know, a
13 pretty good concentration not far from the tree.

14 Q. Okay. Can you -- can we go to the board maybe? We've
15 been having people sketch all day and I don't think you should be
16 exempt. If you can draw maybe where the units are and the tree?
17 Yeah, that's -- that would be a good one.

18 A. Let's see.

19 Q. And we've been asking, is that one unit or two right
20 there?

21 A. This is two.

22 Q. Okay. Perfect.

23 A. And this is the one at the incident.

24 Q. So is that -- I need -- is that 80 and 79?

25 MR. GARDNER: It's backwards from what you would think.

1 MR. NICHOLSON: 80, 79?

2 MR. GARDNER: Yeah.

3 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

4 Q. Yeah. If you could just label it, thanks. Perfect.

5 A. Let's see.

6 Q. Tree.

7 A. The little ladder here in the back. The tree was
8 sitting here.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. And they was getting readings right in here.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Yeah. And they was getting a spread of gas right in
13 here. I think somewhere around right in here was the highest
14 percentage they was getting. And if I recall, it may have been
15 70, 80 percent, something like that.

16 Q. Okay. Can you just draw -- put a note up there? I
17 understand that's just your best recollection, but 70, 80 percent.

18 A. And at that particular time, when I got that information
19 from them, things kind of got off focus because the fire
20 department started concentrating on the building here. And that's
21 when we got word that they, you know, possibly they saw a body or
22 something like that.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. And we was asked to help move some of the debris around
25 that was all around the foundation with our machines. So the guys

1 kind of started helping the fire department pull back debris.

2 Q. Okay. Who are your guys? Who's on your --

3 A. One of the main guys that was actually on the machine
4 pulling back debris was -- Dan Ingram was one of them.

5 Q. Oh, Dan, okay. Dan's in your group. Okay.

6 A. And so we was kind of focused on that for a pretty good
7 while, helping them. We didn't want to start doing anything else
8 until, you know, basically the fire department gave us the go-
9 ahead because it was still smothering, and didn't want to start
10 any digging so close. But he still had a couple guys here
11 still --

12 Q. Who's he?

13 A. -- bar testing and --

14 Q. Who is he? Rob Wall?

15 A. Yeah, Rob was basically, if I recall, kind of still
16 checking around over here with the guys, you know, still bar
17 testing.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. But again, mostly everybody was focused on pulling back
20 the debris for --

21 Q. Sure.

22 A. -- a while, helping the fire department. After all of
23 that was done, you know, and they had done everything they're
24 going to do with, you know, removing everybody from there, we got
25 back on focus as far as our pinpointing. And about that time, we

1 was pretty sure that this is where we need to start digging first.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. And that's where we proceeded. Now, before this, when I
4 got there -- they had already did some digging before I got there,
5 and I don't know what they --

6 Q. Again, "they" is Rob Walls?

7 A. Rob and Bill. They was --

8 Q. Rob and Bill, okay.

9 A. -- they was on the scene long before I got there.

10 Q. Sure.

11 A. And they did cap the service off that was running
12 somewhere in here. I did notice they had capped that service off.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. We proceeded to dig, and I believe Dan Ingram was doing
15 the digging.

16 Q. What are you digging at that point? That's where the
17 main is?

18 A. This is where the main is at.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Two-and-a-quarter cast iron --

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. -- main.

23 Q. Were you seeing bubbling? We've heard about some
24 bubbling. Or were you just simply digging because someone told
25 you the readings were maximum?

1 A. Did I see any bubblings?

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. I didn't see any bubblings.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. They -- most of the bar testing was already done.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. They pretty much had already made a conclusion.

8 Q. They designated where you were just going to dig?

9 A. Yeah, a designated area.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. That was pretty much done before I got there. They
12 just, you know, just continued to check further just to confirm
13 that.

14 Start digging, Dan's digging up. I was there when they
15 was actually digging. And as he was uncovering the main, on the
16 side of the main, he unearthed a rock that was under the main.
17 And when that rock shifted, that's when we got the blow. And as
18 far as digging that -- finished digging the main out --

19 Q. I'm sorry. Who was digging?

20 A. I believe Dan Ingram was digging.

21 Q. Dan, okay. And you said he hit a rock?

22 A. Yes. It was a rock that was lodged up under the main.
23 And when that rock shifted and moved --

24 Q. Was he using an excavator or --

25 A. He was on a -- yeah, it was an excavator.

1 Q. Or by hand? How did he hit a rock that was under the
2 main?

3 A. He didn't hit the rock. He unearthed it --

4 Q. Oh, okay.

5 A. -- and the rock shifted.

6 Q. I see. Okay.

7 A. And as the rock shifted and pulled loose from up under
8 the main, that's when the blow actually started. That's --

9 Q. What is the blow?

10 A. -- when we was able to hear it blow.

11 Q. What do you mean the blow started? The gas coming out?

12 A. Gas started to -- you can actually start hearing the
13 gas.

14 Q. Oh, okay. So you couldn't hear anything up to that
15 point?

16 A. Not at that point. Yeah, I mean, you can smell
17 something.

18 Q. Right.

19 A. It wasn't freely blowing at the time.

20 Q. Okay. So where -- the rock was on which side? East,
21 west of the line?

22 A. The rock was kind of on this side of the main, lodged up
23 under the main, the best I could see.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. You know.

1 Q. So it looks like you're pointing to the -- what would
2 that be? The west side?

3 MR. HENDERSON: This was --

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: South side.

5 MR. HENDERSON: See, this is --

6 MR. CHHATRE: South side.

7 MR. HENDERSON: Yeah, south side. It's west, east --

8 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

9 Q. Oh, I see. Okay, yeah. South side.

10 A. South side.

11 Q. South. West side. Is that right?

12 A. Yeah, south.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. And at that particular point, you know, we went -- we
15 knew then for sure that it was a leak there and at that point went
16 into our normal repair mode. One of the guys got prepared to get
17 in the hole and completely uncover the main, which we did. Didn't
18 have to do much preparing as far as cleaning the main pipe itself.
19 It looked like it was in fairly good shape. Didn't have to --
20 didn't take a long time. Cleaned out enough, put a clamp on it,
21 stopped the leak.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. And after clamping it, he masted that -- the clamp down
24 like we always do. And from that point, we knew that was prepared
25 and we started to, you know, check some more around the hole

1 location to determine was there any more leaks.

2 Q. You're -- this was bar hole testing?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Okay. So can you kind of indicate maybe where else they
5 were looking and --

6 A. Well, at that particular time, Bill and Rob had kind of
7 took over that part as far as the bar testing. I kind of focused
8 on something else. I made some calls and got some other operators
9 involved to bring their leak detectors and flame packs.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. So we can start kind of surveying the area, make sure,
12 you know, wasn't nothing else going on. So we did get two or
13 three other operators involved and they began to go to other
14 units and survey the mains and services the best they could
15 with --

16 Q. Was anyone -- when you exposed this pipe before the blow
17 occurred, what you were talking about, did anyone take pictures of
18 all this stuff to document what was going on?

19 A. No, not at that point.

20 Q. Not at that point?

21 A. Wasn't taking any pictures.

22 Q. And when I was saying east and west, I was trying -- I
23 was picturing the -- where the crack was. Can you -- was this
24 rock to the west of where the crack was or east of it? Did you --

25 A. To the west of where the crack was?

1 Q. Yeah, where the crack -- where the blow occurred or the
2 gas was being released. Do you know that?

3 A. As far as I --

4 MR. GARDNER: Excuse me, Matt?

5 MR. NICHOLSON: Yes.

6 MR. GARDNER: It's my understanding that Keith took some
7 pictures.

8 MR. NICHOLSON: Keith took pictures?

9 MR. BLACKWOOD: Yes, and you have those pictures --

10 MR. NICHOLSON: Oh, those pictures.

11 MR. BLACKWOOD: -- of the leak in place, the clamp.

12 MR. NICHOLSON: No, that's after the clamp though,
13 right?

14 MR. BLACKWOOD: No, you have --

15 MR. CHHATRE: No, one was before the clamp.

16 MR. BLACKWOOD: -- you have two pictures before clamp,
17 and if you look on the south side, you can see the leak blowing
18 into the water, dispelling the water.

19 MR. NICHOLSON: Oh, true.

20 MR. BLACKWOOD: You'll see a contrast in the colors of
21 the water. I can show them to you if you want to see them now?

22 MR. NICHOLSON: Yeah, I don't think I've seen those.
23 Good. I don't need to see them now.

24 MR. BLACKWOOD: Okay. Well, they're on your picture CD
25 that I --

1 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay, terrific.

2 MR. BLACKWOOD: -- delivered to you today.

3 MR. NICHOLSON: Thanks.

4 MR. CHHATRE: They're the ones e-mailed to John and
5 everybody else.

6 MR. NICHOLSON: Those were -- oh, those were very good.

7 MR. BLACKWOOD: The ones you e-mailed as well.

8 MR. CHHATRE: Yes.

9 MR. BLACKWOOD: And you've got (indiscernible) pictures
10 also.

11 MR. CHHATRE: Yeah.

12 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. Terrific. But they don't show a
13 rock or anything?

14 MR. CHHATRE: No, that's -- I will ask --

15 What time was it when the excavation started? Was it in
16 daylight? Was there enough light for anybody to see anything?

17 MR. HENDERSON: Yeah, when the excavation started, it
18 was daylight. It was daylight.

19 MR. BLACKWOOD: It was after 8:30 --

20 MR. HENDERSON: Yeah.

21 MR. BLACKWOOD: -- because that's when they removed the
22 last person from the building.

23 MR. HENDERSON: Right.

24 MR. BLACKWOOD: And the repair was made at 10:40 with
25 the clamp, so it was between that time.

1 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

2 MR. GARDNER: Matt, I remember seeing a photograph of
3 the rock in the stuff that we gave you on the little flash drives.

4 MR. NICHOLSON: I haven't looked at it.

5 MR. GARDNER: Okay. So you may have it. I don't
6 know --

7 MR. NICHOLSON: I'll check it. Terrific, good.

8 MR. GARDNER: Yeah.

9 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. But it didn't -- it's nothing
10 that Lee took; it's --

11 MR. GARDNER: Right.

12 MR. NICHOLSON: -- coming from other people. Is that
13 true?

14 MR. GARDNER: I'm sorry, go ahead.

15 MR. CHHATRE: Yeah, I don't -- he's taking his notes, so
16 I didn't want to stop. I can always ask questions later.

17 MR. HENDERSON: Well, back to the dig, the survey. And
18 the guys start surveying basically the whole complex, you know,
19 surveying the services and most of the main, as much as they
20 possibly could, because a lot of the mains run through parking
21 spaces.

22 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

23 MR. HENDERSON: That was full of cars and everything.
24 So they was basically doing the best they could there. And as
25 they surveyed, when they found something, they called it in, took

1 notes of it. And we got somebody around there to, you know,
2 address that potential leak, and that's what we did on every
3 location that we did find any percentage of gas anywhere. And
4 that's --

5 MR. NICHOLSON: That's the map we're going to get from
6 you, right? Everything they found in that survey?

7 MR. GARDNER: Are you talking about the bar hole?

8 MR. NICHOLSON: Well, the leak surveys, right?

9 MR. CHHATRE: Leaks I think we have. Bar holes --

10 MR. GARDNER: You have the leak survey from --

11 MR. BLACKWOOD: I think he's talking about -- you're
12 talking about the map --

13 MR. NICHOLSON: Yeah, the map --

14 MR. BLACKWOOD: -- that show the leaks.

15 MR. NICHOLSON: Right.

16 MR. BLACKWOOD: The one that had the 10-year, the 10-
17 year map?

18 MR. GARDNER: I gave you the one that had that and we're
19 going to go back and -- that had the 10 years of leaks --

20 MR. NICHOLSON: Right.

21 MR. GARDNER: -- the ones we found.

22 MR. NICHOLSON: It includes the ones that Lee's talking
23 about though, doesn't it?

24 MR. BLACKWOOD: No.

25 MR. NICHOLSON: Oh, it does not.

1 MR. BLACKWOOD: I believe it has some of -- some of
2 them, yes, some of have -- I'm sorry. Some of them aren't in the
3 system and we'll --

4 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

5 MR. BLACKWOOD: -- order supplies to update.

6 MR. GARDNER: Yeah, what we discovered after you made
7 that inquiry yesterday, the leaks we gave you on that map were the
8 leaks that are recorded in our leak system through SAP that we
9 use. The reason some of those leaks were not shown -- you know,
10 we had through 12-19 at 3 p.m. on that map. The reason they were
11 not shown graphically on that map is they had not yet been
12 recorded in our SAP system. We can update our map to reflect
13 those. That was the only reason they weren't shown as a dot, for
14 example; they had not yet been -- they had been worked, but they
15 had not yet been put into that.

16 MR. NICHOLSON: I see.

17 MR. GARDNER: They weren't on the spreadsheet because
18 they weren't extractable from our system yet.

19 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. I understand. Okay. Okay.

20 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

21 Q. I'm sorry. Go ahead. So you were surveying and making
22 notes?

23 A. Yeah, making notes, and again, everywhere we did get any
24 readings we called those leaks in and immediately addressed those
25 leaks.

1 Q. Okay. Were you seeing a greater concentration of leaks
2 around the area of the explosion than you were elsewhere within
3 the community?

4 A. Most of the spots that we did, it was away from this
5 area. It was kind of spotty.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Spotty, nothing in one, you know, specific --

8 Q. Spread out?

9 A. Yeah, they were spread out.

10 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. Ravi?

11 MR. CHHATRE: Yeah, for the other questions, we can just
12 do -- I don't need a sketch for that right now.

13 BY MR. CHHATRE:

14 Q. And, Lee, how long you have been superintendent of the
15 system integrity?

16 A. I've been superintendent about 2 years now.

17 Q. Two years. Okay. And you said part of I guess your
18 responsibility is operations and maintenance of gas line system
19 and that they're operating in good condition and all that?

20 A. Correct.

21 Q. And I guess you're in the same area for -- as the
22 superintendent, and then you have -- then supervisor and operator
23 all in the same department?

24 A. Same department.

25 Q. Okay. So over the years, can you give kind of a rough

1 estimate, ballpark figure, how many leaks that you know have
2 happened in the system-wide? Not just this particular
3 neighborhood, but overall in the cast iron system?

4 A. How many leaks?

5 Q. Yeah, how many leaks repaired that you had to go and
6 fix.

7 A. Wow.

8 Q. I mean, if you don't know that, that is fine. I mean --

9 MR. BELL: And if you don't know, yeah, don't speculate.

10 MR. CHHATRE: Yeah.

11 MR. BELL: We don't want you to do that.

12 MR. CHHATRE: I mean --

13 MR. HENDERSON: It's -- I mean, it's --

14 BY MR. CHHATRE:

15 Q. Well, is it like a handful or they're not very common,
16 or are they frequently, or they cannot happen sometime or -- have
17 you been involved in more than 50?

18 A. It's been -- I mean, that's our job. We --

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. -- investigate and work leaks.

21 Q. So as a part of your maintaining the pipeline system in
22 good operating condition, has any of these leaks that you've
23 fixed, with a clamp or whatever repair, have any of those --
24 internally investigated, sent to outside lab, to find out what
25 caused it?

1 A. None that I know of.

2 Q. So, I guess my then question is how do you know to
3 ensure safe condition if you didn't know what caused it?

4 A. Well, we go through our normal procedures that we've
5 basically been trained on. We make sure, as far as putting on
6 clamps or whatever we use --

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. -- do that by proper procedure, make sure it's done
9 correct, test it out that it's done, and make sure there's no
10 leak before we leave.

11 Q. Okay. And what is the criteria, I guess -- I mean, now
12 I know what a critical is and I'm -- thanks for clearing that for
13 me, because the word critical kind of threw me off a little bit.
14 You classified critical as same as 192 business, right?

15 MR. GARDNER: Business district?

16 MR. CHHATRE: Yeah.

17 MR. GARDNER: Yes, yes.

18 BY MR. CHHATRE:

19 Q. And some of those, I guess, some are done 6 months, some
20 monthly, some yearly. What is the criteria for those? Which area
21 gets monthly surveys? Which area gets 6-month surveys? Based on
22 what?

23 A. The compliance people probably can answer that better.
24 We get it done. They come up with those criterias. And basically
25 our job, we get it done.

1 Q. Okay. So you don't make that decision as to --

2 A. I don't make that decision.

3 Q. Okay. But you are still responsible to make -- to
4 operate the system safely?

5 A. Right. We're responsible for making sure it gets done
6 and done correctly.

7 Q. Okay. Now, who was the incident commander on Alabama
8 Gas side? Was there an incident commander organizing your
9 efforts?

10 A. When I got on site, the top Alagasco person in charge
11 was David Gallagher.

12 Q. Okay. And that is based on what? I mean, did he say
13 I'm in charge, or what made him in charge?

14 A. He was the senior person on site at that particular
15 time, and which according to our procedures made him in charge.

16 Q. Okay. So is there a procedure for emergency response
17 that says if an emergency happens this is our structure, this is,
18 you know, this is how we select the incident commander and this is
19 how things work?

20 A. Well, we understand from -- even from prior incidents,
21 David is well skilled and knowledgeable in that particular area.

22 Q. Okay. But you do not --

23 A. We know that internally and that's --

24 Q. I guess is there a document that shows how this
25 structure works? Are you familiar with any documentation?

1 A. If we have one, I'm not familiar with that.

2 Q. Okay.

3 MR. GARDNER: We do have a -- if we have a significant
4 outage, we have a procedure in that document I gave you that has a
5 formal emergency response team, and it is designed specifically
6 around outages, as opposed to this. But the way that we're
7 structured, we have two primary groups that work: a customer
8 service group and a system integrity group. Customer service is
9 typically beyond the meter; the system integrity is up to the
10 meter. Those are two distinct groups that we formed a couple of
11 years ago. But in an incident such as this, each of those groups
12 work together.

13 And we have an informal process such that, for example,
14 as Lee alluded to, David Gallagher is the most senior person and
15 he would be the person in charge. We do not have a designated
16 incident commander, per se. But based on our past practice and
17 our understanding of the system and how we work together -- for
18 example, the customer service and system integrity personnel will
19 work out of the same building. They have a different reporting
20 structure, but they work together in an incident like this to --
21 we don't have an argument over who's in charge. We know, for
22 example, based on David's expertise, it is understood that he
23 would be in charge of something of this magnitude.

24 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. So was he getting reports from
25 everybody who is working as a team there? Or is there a final

1 person who will know everything that is going on? I mean, that's
2 the role of an incident commander. He is directing the effort for
3 the whole incident on the company's behalf, and I'm trying to find
4 out -- because what I heard so far was different crews and
5 different people are doing different work at different locations.

6 MR. GARDNER: Right. It's my understanding that the
7 work was going on in coordination with what tasks and what roles
8 the individuals in our company are qualified to do. But for all
9 practical purposes, David was in charge of the scene for us.

10 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Okay.

11 MR. GARDNER: And was directing the efforts. David was
12 directing the efforts of the personnel.

13 MR. CHHATRE: Oh, okay.

14 MR. GARDNER: And was the primary decision-maker on the
15 scene.

16 MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

17 MR. GARDNER: Is that accurate, Lee? I want to make
18 sure I'm (indiscernible) --

19 MR. HENDERSON: That's correct. That's correct. He was
20 -- he would pass things that needed to be done on our side to me
21 and I would direct our guys to see that it get done.

22 BY MR. CHHATRE:

23 Q. So did David Gallagher ask you to do the bar hole
24 testing in the areas that you were doing, or you directed those?

25 A. Well, the bar testing was already going on prior to me

1 getting there.

2 Q. Right. But, I mean, you as the supervisor of the crew,
3 do you check with Dave Gallagher that -- did he ask to do the bar
4 hole testing where it was being done? I mean, who was directing
5 the bar hole testing is really what I'm trying to find out.

6 A. Prior to me getting there?

7 Q. Well, prior to you or even upon your arrival. I mean,
8 somebody has to know what's happening and I'm just trying to find
9 out.

10 A. Well, even the crews that was already there, they was
11 getting direction prior to me getting there.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. I don't know what time David got there, because we
14 had some crews that responded initially.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. And they would go through their normal procedures.

17 Q. Okay. And who is they and what are their normal
18 procedures?

19 A. The first crew that got on scene.

20 Q. Okay. So it's a crew. Okay. Now, did you discuss with
21 Dave or about doing any bar hole testing across the street from
22 the ground zero incident? There is another building across the
23 street. And as far as I know, as of right now, no bar hole
24 testing was done on that side of the residence. So I guess my
25 question is did you talk -- did you discuss that with Dave and the

1 decision was made not to do it?

2 A. Which side of the street are you --

3 Q. This is (indiscernible) here.

4 A. Uh-huh.

5 Q. You see the main. There are structures here.

6 MR. NICHOLSON: So Ravi's talking about the north side
7 of the street.

8 BY MR. CHHATRE:

9 Q. North side of the street. Because as far as I know, and
10 maybe I can't recollect, but as far as I know, there was no bar
11 hole testing done on that side. There was no bar hole testing, as
12 far as I know, that was done here.

13 A. Okay. It may not have been bar holes down because we
14 ran a survey -- a flame pack survey over that area, that we did
15 not detect any kind of gas readings.

16 Q. Okay. So this is sometime after the rupture?

17 A. After the rupture. We surveyed that whole area.

18 Q. And that was done by the consultants or that was by --

19 A. That was done by company crews.

20 Q. Crews. Okay.

21 A. And wherever they found any readings, that's where we
22 bar tested --

23 Q. Okay. That helps.

24 A. -- and went through the procedures.

25 Q. That helps. So, did you physically see the pipe in the

1 ditch when it was exposed?

2 A. Yes, I did.

3 Q. Okay. And who was directing the excavation work at the
4 pipe when the pipe was being exposed? Who was telling the backhoe
5 operator to do the digging, that he is close to the pipe, he's not
6 close to the pipe, when hand digging is necessary, and -- who was
7 doing that?

8 A. As I recall, there was several of us standing around,
9 but they -- his helper, who normally directs him in digging and
10 even spotting. That's who they normally get their direction from.

11 Q. Okay. But you -- okay. I got you.

12 Now, how closely -- is your operation part of integrity
13 management program or do you work with integrity management folks
14 in the company?

15 A. Do you want -- explain?

16 Q. No. You are responsible for pipeline safety and all
17 that and you are essentially on the construction side, the cap
18 side.

19 A. Correct.

20 Q. Is there an integrity management group or a group of
21 people in the company? Do you know if there are -- there is an
22 integrity management group in the company?

23 A. Our group that I work with, we're basically in just the
24 maintenance.

25 Q. So you are considered part of maintenance?

1 A. Yes, of our system, yes.

2 Q. But then do you deal with the integrity management
3 people as a part of maintenance?

4 A. We -- to a certain degree. You know, all of us, you
5 know, works together. We get training and whatever from -- that
6 comes down to our group and they kind of give us directions in
7 what need to be done.

8 Q. Integrity management folks do?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. And who --

11 MR. GARDNER: Ravi, may I --

12 MR. CHHATRE: Sure. Sure.

13 MR. GARDNER: -- clarify? We do not have a specific
14 integrity management department, but Lee's area and others like
15 him manage and work through our system integrity department. The
16 regulations, as they relate to integrity management, we have
17 transmission or distribution. The regulatory aspect of that is
18 managed through my group, and we provide direction based on the
19 requirements of 192 to set up procedures and practices that allow
20 us to demonstrate integrity management. We don't have a
21 specific --

22 MR. CHHATRE: Integrity management group?

23 MR. GARDNER: -- department named integrity management,
24 but the work Lee does is our system integrity umbrella, so to
25 speak. That department handles the integrity management,

1 quote/unquote, "functions" of our company.

2 MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

3 MR. NICHOLSON: What Lee does sounds reactive. Is there
4 a proactive component on a distribution where you --

5 MR. GARDNER: Yes.

6 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

7 MR. GARDNER: There's a couple of departments within the
8 System Integrity Department. Lee's in the -- what we call the
9 tactical area, which is we have strategic areas: The quality
10 assurance and compliance is my group, and we deal with Wallace and
11 his team. We have a pipeline risk management group that looks at
12 our pipe replacement and maintenance planning. Then we have a
13 system operations group, and you'll see this from the org chart,
14 they deal with our pressure control and engineering. And so we --
15 it's all under the same umbrella, but Lee's focus and the people
16 you've talked to today are on the tactical side or the operations
17 side. My group and my counterparts, some of whom you met last
18 night, direct the efforts from a strategic standpoint such that we
19 manage the integrity of our system. It's just not a specific
20 integrity management department, but we manage our system
21 integrity efforts through this system integrity effort. Does that
22 help?

23 MR. NICHOLSON: Yeah, I think I understand what you're
24 saying. It's not one group. You do it through multiple entities,
25 like --

1 MR. GARDNER: Right. It's under the direction of one --

2 MR. NICHOLSON: Right.

3 MR. GARDNER: -- one officer, but it's one -- it's done
4 in such a way that we look at both the regulatory aspects, the
5 planning aspects, and then as Lee alluded to, we have people that
6 execute -- we have people that react to situations, and we have
7 people that execute the plans and the work that's developed on a
8 strategic level, including pipe replacement, long-term planning,
9 SCADA, et cetera.

10 MR. CHHATRE: All right. That's all I have. Thank you
11 so much.

12 MR. WILLIAMS: I don't have any questions.

13 MR. GARDNER: I'm good.

14 MR. NICHOLSON: You guys, Keith? Wallace?

15 MR. BLACKWOOD: I'm good.

16 BY MR. JONES:

17 Q. Lee, you said you looked at the pipe. Could you tell
18 what size crack was on the pipe and where it was located?

19 A. The best I can tell, the -- I know it wasn't cracked all
20 the way around, and the blow itself didn't appear to be blowing
21 out of the top. It looked like it was blowing out of the bottom.
22 And in looking at -- kind of looking at both sides of it, you
23 didn't see -- I didn't see a crack on the left-hand side. So it
24 appears that it was kind of like from the middle of the bottom up,
25 kind of like that. I don't know the full length of it, but it

1 didn't -- it wasn't cracked all the way around as far as I can
2 remember.

3 Q. Okay. When you're saying you didn't see it on the left-
4 hand side, are you looking at it from the west side looking back
5 to the east?

6 A. From the middle back to the right.

7 Q. Okay. So you're --

8 A. You're talking --

9 Q. -- on this end of the hole looking back, and so you're
10 seeing it from the middle back around to the right side, back
11 toward the building?

12 A. Right.

13 Q. Okay. But you couldn't tell what size the crack was?
14 You could just --

15 A. Couldn't tell what size it was.

16 Q. Did you see any roots when they was digging around it?

17 A. It was a pretty good size root. I know there was a big
18 size root over the hole and there was up under the main, because I
19 think one of the guys that got down there had to cut it, had to
20 chip it and cut it in the process of trying to put the clamp on
21 also.

22 Q. Okay. When you were out there and they were bar
23 testing, on the -- that would be the east side of the building to
24 the south, from that tree back to the south, back up toward
25 Georgia, did you see any kind of readings or know of any kind of

1 readings they got up that way?

2 A. They did some bar testing back up that way. They were
3 getting --

4 MR. NICHOLSON: Can you -- where's "back up that way"?
5 I just need you to point to it here.

6 MR. HENDERSON: They did some bar testing like up
7 through here. They were getting some kind of a -- some readings.
8 They was putting them on some notes. I can't remember from the
9 top of my head what readings they were getting. Everybody was
10 taking notes and writing it down because --

11 BY MR. JONES:

12 Q. But there was no gas main or anything on that side of
13 the street going up that direction then?

14 A. No, no gas main I know of is coming up through here.

15 MR. JONES: Okay. Okay. That's all I've got.

16 MR. NICHOLSON: Are we done?

17 BY MR. CHHATRE:

18 Q. Yeah, one follow-up question. Now, since the accident,
19 did you have any discussion with the crew who were at the scene as
20 to what happened, how things went, if anything went wrong? What I
21 consider postmortem, if you will.

22 A. The crew that was there before I got there?

23 Q. I mean, your team. The crew that reports to you,
24 whichever is -- you know, however many people responded to the
25 scene. Did you have any discussion with them? A lessons learned

1 type discussion?

2 A. We -- I mean, we have done some general talk, but from
3 the time of the accident, we've been so focused on investigating
4 other leaks or whatever, you know, just sitting down talking about
5 what happened and what could have happened, we hadn't got to that
6 point yet. We've been involved in investigating and making
7 repairs.

8 Q. Was there any discussion among supervisors?

9 A. Same thing with the supervisors. We've been engaged
10 in --

11 Q. Nothing yet. I mean, essentially --

12 A. Nothing yet.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. That I'm sure will come.

15 Q. Thanks.

16 MR. CHHATRE: I'm done. Thank you much.

17 MR. NICHOLSON: Oh, I'm sorry.

18 MR. HENDERSON: Thank you.

19 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

20 Q. Just one -- and this might not be the right question,
21 Bob, chime in. Who manages the Southern Cross legal survey
22 contract if -- is that something you would do, Lee?

23 A. No.

24 MR. GARDNER: Company-wide, that's managed by the
25 manager of maintenance planning, Phillip Hurd (ph.). He's in

1 Mixon Russ's organization. You met Mixon --

2 MR. NICHOLSON: Right.

3 MR. GARDNER: -- last night.

4 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. So it's --

5 MR. GARDNER: That's managed --

6 MR. NICHOLSON: -- nothing Lee would be involved with?

7 MR. GARDNER: Well, it's managed companywide, but then

8 -- from a contract standpoint, and the individual work locations

9 interact with the survey technicians from Southern Cross. But to

10 my knowledge -- and, Lee, tell me if I'm wrong -- I don't believe

11 we had any Southern Cross personnel on site.

12 MR. HENDERSON: No, we didn't.

13 MR. GARDNER: For this particular effort. But the

14 routine planned surveys that we do, I think survey-wise, are done

15 typically by Southern Cross, with the exception of what we

16 described earlier.

17 MR. NICHOLSON: And would you say his name was Phil,

18 Phillip?

19 MR. GARDNER: Phillip Hurd.

20 MR. NICHOLSON: He assigns the work to them or it's

21 assigned through --

22 MR. GARDNER: He coordinates the work. The work is date

23 sensitive.

24 MR. NICHOLSON: Oh, that's right. He's does the

25 annual --

1 MR. GARDNER: We have to do it. His group maintains the
2 boundaries based on the pipe material and a schedule, and his
3 group manages the work and issues the work out to the contractor.
4 And the responses to anything they find, if they detect a leak,
5 that's managed by --

6 MR. NICHOLSON: They've -- Southern Cross works direct
7 -- they've basically integrate it into your system at that point?

8 MR. GARDNER: Right.

9 MR. NICHOLSON: They call your dispatcher.

10 MR. GARDNER: That's correct.

11 MR. NICHOLSON: It's as if they're Alagasco. Okay. But
12 as far as training Southern -- I mean, you just rely on Southern
13 Cross to provide the training to their employees?

14 MR. GARDNER: That's right. They have to demonstrate to
15 us that they have qualified personnel to perform the leak surveys.

16 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay, Lee, I guess at this point we'll
17 -- if no one else has anything, we're going to terminate this
18 interview. Thanks for coming in. We're off the record.

19 MR. HENDERSON: Thank you.

20 MR. CHHATRE: Thank you so much.

21 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

22

23

24

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: ALAGASCO NATURAL GAS RELEASE
 DECEMBER 17, 2013
 NEAR BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA
 Interview of Lee Henderson

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-14-MP-001

PLACE: Birmingham, Alabama

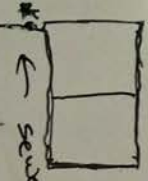
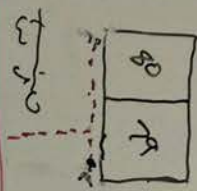
DATE: December 21, 2013

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
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Transcriber

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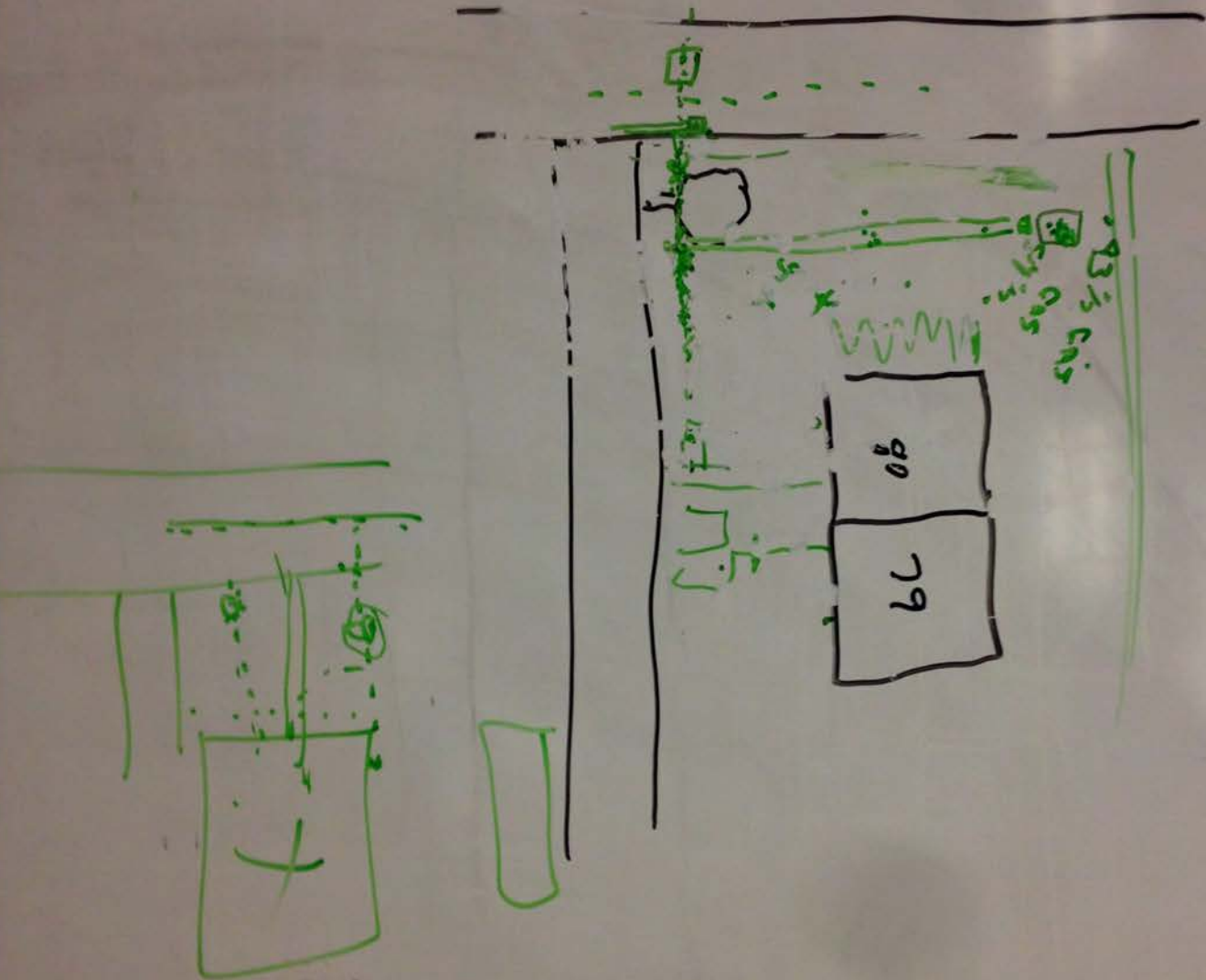


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