

## 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 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: MICHAEL DONALDSON

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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WILLIE WILLIAMS, Investigator  
Fire Investigations Bureau  
Birmingham, Alabama

WALLACE JONES, Gas Pipeline Safety Administrator  
KEITH BLACKWOOD, Pipeline Safety Investigator  
Alabama Public Service Commission

MICHAEL BELL  
(Representative on behalf of Mr. Donaldson)

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## I N T E R V I E W

MR. NICHOLSON: Good afternoon. Today is Saturday, December 21st, 2013. My name is Matthew Nicholson. I'm an investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board in Washington, D.C. We are currently in Birmingham, Alabama at the Alagasco Center for Energy Technology. We are investigating the Birmingham, Alabama natural gas leak with ignition which occurred on December 17th of 2013. This is Case No. DCA-14-MP-001. We are here today to interview Mike Donaldson.

## INTERVIEW OF MICHAEL DONALDSON

BY MR. NICHOLSON:

Q. For the record, Mike, please state your first and last name with spelling.

A. Michael L. Donaldson, M-i-c-h-a-e-l, L, D-o-n-a-l-d-s-o-n.

Q. Thank you. And, Mike, please state for the record your title, employer and a business e-mail and phone number.

A. My employer is Alagasco. I do not have an e-mail.

Q. Okay.

A. My phone -- I lost my phone 2 years ago and I hadn't got one back, so I use my personal phone.

Q. Oh, okay. We don't -- we won't ask for that. And what is your title at Alagasco?

A. I'm a journeyman apprentice.

Q. In what division?

1           A.     Construction.

2           Q.     Oh, okay.  Mike, you're allowed to have one person of  
3 your choosing to be present for these interviews.  Can you please  
4 indicate, for the record, who you have chosen to be your  
5 representative?

6           A.     Mike Bell.

7           Q.     Mike Bell.  Okay.

8                   MR. NICHOLSON:  We will now go around the room and  
9 introduce ourselves for the record.  Please state your name and  
10 the agency you represent.  I will begin, and we'll proceed to my  
11 left.

12                   My name is Matthew Nicholson, NTSB Investigator.

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

14                   MR. BELL:  Mike Bell for Mike Donaldson.

15                   MR. WILLIAMS:  Willie Williams, Birmingham Fire  
16 Investigations.

17                   MR. LUPO:  Don Lupo.  I work for the mayor.

18                   MR. GARDNER:  Bob Gardner, Alabama Gas.

19                   MR. BLACKWOOD:  Keith Blackwood, Alabama Public Service  
20 Commission.

21                   MR. JONES:  Wallace Jones, Alabama Public Service  
22 Commission.

23                   BY MR. NICHOLSON:

24           Q.     Okay.  Just to begin with, maybe you could give us a  
25 little background about when you started at Alagasco and work our

1 way up to now maybe?

2 A. I was hired June 21st, 2006. I read meters for 2 years.  
3 I don't know if you need that information or not.

4 Q. Sure. That's fine.

5 A. No, I mean, 2 months. I went over into construction  
6 there. Was an assistant or a crewman and became an assistant  
7 specialist shortly after that for 4 years, and I've been a  
8 construction apprentice going on for 2 years, but I've been on  
9 light duty due to a shoulder injury for the last year.

10 Q. So, I'm sorry, you became a construction apprentice in  
11 2010?

12 A. October the 5th, I believe, would be 2 years.

13 Q. Okay. And can you talk a little bit about what a  
14 construction apprentice takes care of? The mains or the service  
15 lines or --

16 A. Both. We take care of leaks underground and  
17 aboveground.

18 Q. On? Was it both --

19 A. Mains, services.

20 Q. Mains and services. Okay. And do you actually find the  
21 leaks or is someone else finding the leaks and calling you out  
22 or --

23 A. We find them.

24 Q. So you do the surveys?

25 A. If we get a call, we go investigate, find the leak, dig

1 it up, fix it.

2 Q. Okay. Who do you get a call from?

3 A. We get a call from dispatcher.

4 Q. Okay, dispatcher calls you.

5 A. Or we have a survey crew that goes around and finds  
6 leaks and then we get tickets on it and we go take care of it.

7 MR. GARDNER: Mike, are you referring to the third-party  
8 company we use, when you say --

9 MR. DONALDSON: Yes.

10 MR. GARDNER: Okay.

11 MR. NICHOLSON: That was my next question. Yeah.

12 MR. DONALDSON: That -- who is that?

13 MR. GARDNER: Southern Cross.

14 MR. DONALDSON: Southern Cross. That's right.

15 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

16 Q. So you can either get a call from dispatch or a ticket  
17 from this Southern Cross?

18 A. Correct.

19 Q. Okay. And so maybe we'll just go -- we'll skip ahead to  
20 December 17th, the day of the accident, the morning of the  
21 accident. We understand you were involved. Maybe you could just  
22 kind of take us through the whole story starting from the time you  
23 were aware of -- made -- notified of it?

24 A. Okay. We were on a leak on South Shades Crest, and Max  
25 was with us. We try to stay with Max, and Max tries to stay with

1 us, somewhat sort of like work together. And we had fixed the  
2 first cut and Max was, I believe, was at the house doing his  
3 rebuild and relight --

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. -- when Max called us on the phone and said he just got  
6 a call from Birmingham stating that there was an explosion. And  
7 we was up the hill waiting on Max. And Max give us an address  
8 and -- or somewhat of an address and we -- asked us would we head  
9 that way. We told him we would. We called Birmingham and got the  
10 address from Rochelle and headed that way. And I believe that was  
11 around 3:00, something like that.

12 Q. It was 3:00 when you started heading to the accident?

13 A. We was actually en route.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I believe around 3:00, 3:05, something like that. I  
16 think it was 3:05. They may have called and wanted an ETA. We  
17 was 23 minutes out.

18 Q. Who called for the ETA? Rochelle?

19 A. Yeah. I think maybe the fire department was asking for  
20 it.

21 Q. Okay. How do you know your ETA? I'm just curious. Is  
22 that just --

23 A. We have GPS.

24 Q. Oh, you're looking at your GPS. Okay. Okay, continue.

25 A. We showed up on the scene and we was trying to --



1 there's so many fire trucks there, trying to find a way into the  
2 fire, I guess you could say. We ended up having to go back around  
3 the building and finally got in up that way.

4 Q. What address were you given for the accident, do you  
5 remember?

6 A. I'm really not sure what it was.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Joppa Court Way is all I know.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. I got it wrote down in my book, but I didn't really  
11 think to bring it.

12 Q. That's all right. If you don't know, that's fine. We  
13 can request it later.

14 So you showed up on scene and tried to make your way  
15 to -- I guess you could see the fire at that point from where you  
16 were?

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. Okay. So where did you end up staging?

19 A. Right at the fire.

20 Q. Oh, you could get to the fire?

21 A. Yeah, we got to it. We unloaded the backhoe and got  
22 around that way.

23 Q. Okay. Were you meeting up with Max at this point or --

24 A. Yeah. Max met us out on the road. He's actually the  
25 one that kind of let us in to get, you know, to get the -- to the

1 fire.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. And we was trying to -- when we got there, we tried to  
4 locate the service, and we could not get it located due to the  
5 debris and the fire, and the service actually run a little weird.  
6 It didn't run normally the way a service would run, so we had  
7 trouble finding that. But we did eventually find it and get it  
8 cut off.

9 Q. So it wasn't normal in what respect?

10 A. Actually, you know, when you run a service to a house,  
11 usually it will go from the main straight to the house. But this  
12 one was on the end of the building and it ran up and come down the  
13 side of the building, catching each service probably, I'm going to  
14 say, 2 to 3 feet off the building, you know, to each service,  
15 which I hadn't seen it done that way before, but --

16 Q. How did you find that out then? How did you -- did you  
17 start digging? Is that --

18 A. After we got the gas cut off to get in there close to --

19 Q. Oh, okay.

20 A. -- to locate, we found out how it ran.

21 Q. But your first assumption was it was a straight line?  
22 Okay.

23 A. First assumption was a straight line either coming off  
24 of the alley or Joppa, which we couldn't find it from there.

25 Q. Find it by digging, or were you doing a (indiscernible)?

1 A. Locate.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Locate.

4 Q. Okay. So he tried to show you the service, but you  
5 couldn't locate it because of this routing or --

6 A. Who tried to show us?

7 Q. I'm just taking you back. I thought you -- at this  
8 point in the story, you were trying to locate the service --

9 A. Yeah. We were trying -- me and Pete were trying to  
10 locate the service and we couldn't get it to locate. And the  
11 reason for it because it ran --

12 Q. Different?

13 A. -- abnormal. I guess it's abnormal.

14 Q. Okay. So what did you do after that? What did you do  
15 about that?

16 A. Well, I started -- a lot of times if we cannot find a  
17 service, what we'll do is go to the riser and dig it up at the  
18 riser and see which way the pipes run, you know.

19 Q. Yeah.

20 A. But the fire -- I actually got up there pretty close to  
21 it, but I think maybe Gallagher assumed it may be too dangerous to  
22 try to do, so we backed out off of that.

23 Q. So David Gallagher was on scene at that time?

24 A. Yes, he was.

25 Q. Okay. When did he arrive?

1 A. He was there --

2 Q. Before you or --

3 A. No. Shortly after.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. With so much going on, I'm not going to know specific  
6 times.

7 Q. Oh, I -- we're not trying to get that. Just relative  
8 times is fine.

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. And so you said you normally go up to the riser and you  
11 dig. Is that hand digging or --

12 A. Well, that's not normal, but if we can't find the  
13 service that's what we'll do.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. But I think since the fire, you know, was as it was, we  
16 assumed it was maybe too dangerous to try to dig it that far.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. So we backed out.

19 Q. Okay. So what did you do -- since you backed out, what  
20 was going on?

21 A. Well, wasn't nothing we could do. We just waited till,  
22 we waited till -- actually what we did was we got the fire put out  
23 and Max went in and valved the service off.

24 Q. Okay. And you were just on standby at that point?

25 A. Somewhat. I mean --

1           Q.    You weren't taking -- you weren't doing leak readings  
2    or --

3           A.    No.

4           Q.    Okay.  Once the service was turned off, what happened?  
5    Do you dig up the line or you --

6           A.    The other crew come in.  They tried to locate it.  They  
7    couldn't get it located either.  But after we did further  
8    investigation we ended up finding it down the service on the other  
9    end of the building and coming up.  We dug it up and cut it and  
10   killed it at that point.

11          Q.    So after the fire was out, you did manage to locate  
12   it using the --

13          A.    Eventually, yes.

14          Q.    -- scanner, aboveground --

15          A.    Yeah.

16          Q.    Okay.

17          A.    A pipehorn.

18          Q.    So you weren't digging anything during the fire?

19          A.    Yeah.  Yeah, I tried to dig it up just by chance to see  
20   if I could find that service --

21          Q.    Oh, okay.

22          A.    -- and we could not find it by digging.

23          Q.    Okay.  So you were doing some digging during the fire  
24   but you still couldn't find --

25          A.    Yeah.  We actually dug out right off the main where the

1 service should have been.

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. And then that didn't work, so what we did is we dug  
4 parallel. That didn't work either. So we knew something was, you  
5 know --

6 Q. You dug parallel to your cast iron main?

7 A. We dug -- like if you're service runs straight to the  
8 building, what we done is, you know, just kind of eyeballed it and  
9 dug up here next to the main.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. So we could kill it at the main. We couldn't find it  
12 there. So what we did is we pulled up toward the building and dug  
13 a parallel to see if we could find it that way. Couldn't find it  
14 that way either.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. That's because the service ran up to the building and  
17 went down the side of the building.

18 Q. Well, yeah, I think Max had drawn that. So it T-d off  
19 and --

20 A. Right.

21 Q. Okay. But after the fire was out, you were able to  
22 finally locate it in the line --

23 A. Yeah. Locate it, we dug it up and we capped it, cut it  
24 and capped it.

25 Q. Where did you cap it? At the meter or --

1           A.    We capped it at the service, on the service line.

2           Q.    Okay.  And then at what point did you ever expose the  
3 main?  Or did you take bar hole readings?  What was the next step?

4           A.    Dan actually come out and dug up the -- we -- you found  
5 the leak, and we dug it up and it was -- ended up being a broke  
6 main.  And it was fairly fresh broke main, and I -- you know, I'm  
7 assuming that the explosion caused that.  Because normally if you  
8 have a leak that's been leaking for a long time it'll have, you  
9 know, a ball on it, and this was fresh dirt that was just getting  
10 -- it's just dry from an hour or 2 -- or 2 hours, 3 hours or  
11 something along that line.

12          Q.    What does that mean, have a ball on it?  What does  
13 that --

14          A.    That gas takes all the moisture and stuff, that kind of  
15 stuff out, and it forms a ball around that --

16          Q.    Okay.

17          A.    -- a dry ball around that thing.

18          Q.    Oh, I see.

19          A.    Where it's blown.

20          Q.    Okay.

21          A.    Keeps blowing, you know, it'll just dry everything out.

22          Q.    Dry the dirt out around there?

23          A.    Yeah, and that ball will stay intact most of the time  
24 around that main.  But this one was -- it was fresh, so --

25          Q.    Because the soil looked uniform around it?

1 A. Um-hum.

2 Q. Moisture coming --

3 A. I mean, you could dig it up and the fall would just --  
4 it would just fall off the main.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. You know, so --

7 Q. But I want to go back a little bit because you said they  
8 found a leak and then you dug up the main. Who found the leak or  
9 how did you know to dig the main up?

10 A. Because it was bubbling from the water. All the water  
11 that they had was -- the ground started bubbling, so we need to --

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. -- we put some holes down and --

14 Q. So this is the fire hose water, the runoff from the  
15 firefighters had caused bubbling?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Okay. So it wasn't from bar hole testing or anything.  
18 Oh, okay.

19 A. No. But we -- after we seen the bubbling, we started  
20 testing, bar hole testing.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Found the leak that way and dug it up.

23 Q. You were doing the bar hole testing? When you say we --

24 A. We all were.

25 Q. All.



1           A.    Yeah.

2           Q.    Which would be who?  You, who else --

3           A.    It was me and Pete.  Me and Pete --

4           Q.    Okay.

5           A.    -- Max --

6           Q.    Oh, Max as well.  Okay.

7           A.    Yeah.

8           Q.    Just the three of you?

9           A.    David Gallagher was there.  There was a whole bunch of

10          us there.

11          Q.    But he wasn't doing the bar hole testing?

12          A.    No.

13          Q.    No.  I meant just the people doing bar hole testing.

14          A.    Yeah.  Dan and his crew, which I'm not sure who was on

15          his crew but --

16          Q.    Are we referring to Dan Ingram?

17          A.    Yes.

18          Q.    Okay.  Can you talk a little bit about what you were

19          finding then?  What levels are we talking about?

20          A.    Ninety-five percent.

21          Q.    Ninety-five percent gas.  Is that what that is?  Okay.

22                  Okay.  And now where were you in relation to the actual

23          bubbling?  Were you --

24          A.    Forty feet.

25          Q.    Oh, 40 feet.

1           A.    From the building.

2           Q.    Forty feet from the building.  And how far east, west  
3 from the crack?  Were you going right where the bubbles were to do  
4 some bar hole readings?

5           A.    Yeah.

6           Q.    Okay.

7           A.    Right over top of it, which --

8           Q.    And then did you follow down the main?

9           A.    Yeah.

10          Q.    Okay.

11          A.    We dug down the main and found the crack.

12          Q.    Well, did you continue to take bar hole tests along  
13 the --

14          A.    Yeah, we did.

15          Q.    Okay.  And what -- so 95 is roughly on top of it?

16          A.    What we did is we started getting the gas in the street,  
17 and we worked our way out toward -- I don't know if you was out  
18 there.

19          Q.    Yeah, I was out there.

20          A.    There's a big tree --

21          Q.    Yep.

22          A.    -- out there.  We ended up finding it just past that  
23 tree.  And we took readings toward the other end of the building  
24 and it kept dropping out.  We actually got into LEL, so we knew  
25 the leak was back toward the tree.

1 Q. Okay. Could we -- maybe we could sketch this then?

2 Could you --

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. I'm trying not to have to do this again. So we're all  
5 clear, if you could just maybe draw the unit 79 and 80 and the  
6 streets for us and then we can --

7 A. Well, here's the -- say, there's the street, and here's  
8 the alley that comes down. Here's the apartment building.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Service ran up, come down the building. Right here was  
11 the meter.

12 Q. So this was -- we would have a division there? This  
13 is --

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Which one's which? I forget.

16 A. Yes. Well, I don't know. I mean, it's whatever.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Whatever it was, but that's the way the apartments run.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think it's 79.

20 MR. NICHOLSON: 79's on the left, right?

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, 80's on the left.

22 MR. NICHOLSON: Oh, 80. This would be 80.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: 80 on the left; 79 on the right.

24 MR. DONALDSON: That's 80?

25 MR. NICHOLSON: Yeah.

1 MR. DONALDSON: 79?

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Matt. can I make a suggestion?

3 MR. NICHOLSON: Yes.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You may have trouble picking that  
5 up the picture.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Because of the faintness of  
8 the --

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Do you want to draw this  
10 (indiscernible)?

11 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

12 Q. Yeah, use a black.

13 A. Do a black one. Start over again.

14 Q. Yeah, we need high contrast. Yeah, use that.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I have to put my glasses on.

16 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

17 Q. Is that -- I'm sorry. Is this Joppa?

18 A. This is Joppa.

19 Q. Joppa. Okay.

20 A. 80 you say?

21 Q. Think that was 80. Yeah.

22 A. Actually, that's going to be --

23 Q. You could draw the cast iron main in a different color  
24 if you wanted.

25 A. Okay.

1 Q. That's the service line you've drawn?  
2 A. Yes. This is the service.  
3 Q. Okay. And it goes to 79 as well?  
4 A. Yes.  
5 Q. Okay.  
6 A. Big tree here.  
7 Q. Okay.  
8 A. I'll do it in sewer color.  
9 Q. All right.  
10 A. And I believe the main comes down right through here.  
11 Q. Okay.  
12 A. Normally your service would run straight --  
13 Q. Right.  
14 A. -- to each meter, which this one goes up through here  
15 like that.  
16 Q. And where does it -- can you draw it on 79 as well? Do  
17 you know how it came off --  
18 A. Yeah. That meter was right here.  
19 Q. And where was its service line then? Did it connect  
20 back to this?  
21 A. Yeah. Go back up to here.  
22 Q. Okay.  
23 A. I'm not sure about these two here. There was so much  
24 rubble there that I dug this meter out here, and this one was  
25 still in --

1 Q. You dug 80 out.

2 A. I dug 80 out. It was blew off the --

3 Q. Oh, you dug the actual meter out. Okay.

4 A. Yeah. The meter out.

5 Q. I got you. Sorry.

6 A. Actually, I tried to dig up -- what we did is we dug a

7 hole, we dug a hole right here. Then we dug a hole right here

8 like that --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. -- to try to find that service. We could not find it.

11 We located out this way, too, thinking it may have come off this

12 street. Could not find it. Ended up finding it, after we got the

13 fire put out, up this way.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Around that way. Main here.

16 Q. And then you were talking about --

17 A. The break --

18 Q. -- digging parallel -- the break was at --

19 A. Yeah. Right here.

20 Q. Oh, that's what you meant in the parallel.

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Okay. And the break was actually here?

23 A. Break was here.

24 Q. Can you take a red or something --

25 A. Yeah.

1           Q.    -- make that really obvious for the camera.  Take a  
2 picture of it.

3                    Okay.  And then you were bar hole testing where?  Can  
4 you just put little X's?

5           A.    We bar -- here, here, down through here, here, here,  
6 here, all the way out to the street.

7           Q.    Okay.  And you --

8           A.    Patched right here and was getting 95 percent here.

9           Q.    Oh, right here?

10          A.    Coming this way.  Yeah.

11          Q.    Can you put a 95 there?  Okay.  So you weren't right on  
12 top of it with the 95?

13          A.    No.  I mean, it was -- actually, it was going -- the gas  
14 seemed to be blowing that way.

15          Q.    Okay.

16          A.    I think there might have even been a joint right here or  
17 something, but it's like 95, 95 all the way down through here.  
18 Then it started going into the 40s and down to zero.

19          Q.    It was as you moved this direction that you got the  
20 LELs?

21          A.    Right.  Yeah.

22          Q.    Okay.

23          A.    Yeah.  It was out here, then it started coming back this  
24 way.

25          Q.    Okay.  So you knew you had something.  And the bubbles

1 you were seeing I guess were right --

2 A. Here. Right in here, right in this area.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Matt, just so I'm clear, when you  
4 were saying this way, were you saying to the right? That's where  
5 you got the LELs.

6 MR. NICHOLSON: I'm saying to the west.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: To the west.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

9 MR. DONALDSON: Here.

10 MR. NICHOLSON: For the record, yeah.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: To the right of the diagram. To  
12 the west of the city.

13 MR. NICHOLSON: To right is diagram. To the west is --

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did you take any readings up  
15 toward the building as you were doing this?

16 MR. DONALDSON: We couldn't get up there at the time,  
17 but no, I didn't.

18 MR. NICHOLSON: Towards -- you're asking towards 80?

19 MR. DONALDSON: You talking about up here?

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Toward 80, yes.

21 MR. DONALDSON: There was so much debris up there, we  
22 really couldn't --

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did you take any beyond the tree?

25 MR. DONALDSON: What, this way -- that way?



1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, that way.

2 MR. DONALDSON: Yes, we did.

3 MR. NICHOLSON: To the south?

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did you find any --

5 MR. DONALDSON: Well, I didn't do it. The other crews  
6 that were out there, they did it, and I don't know what they got.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

8 MR. DONALDSON: I think they was -- went all up through  
9 here doing readings, actually even around that way.

10 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

11 Q. Who was that, do you know?

12 A. It was Rob Wall and some of the other crews that were  
13 there. This was way after daylight. When we first got there it  
14 was still dark.

15 Q. Right.

16 A. You know, and this was after daylight. And then --

17 Q. Was the fire out at this point when you --

18 A. Yes, it was.

19 Q. Oh, okay.

20 A. Yes, it was. And the victims were right here.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. In under the -- actually, they were wherever that --  
23 this right here was laying down this way, and they were laying in  
24 right in here. And we assumed -- now it's bad to say, we assumed  
25 they were dead.

1 Q. Okay.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You may have gotten confused  
3 about where they were laying you first started --

4 MR. NICHOLSON: We're not, you know --

5 MR. DONALDSON: Yeah. I was. Actually, see this, this  
6 right here is the second --

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh, you're looking at it like  
8 it's a profile.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He's looking it from the side.

10 MR. DONALDSON: Yeah, like a profile.

11 MR. DONALDSON: This right here --

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Not a bird's eye view.

13 MR. NICHOLSON: Oh, you know, I didn't know that either.  
14 Okay.

15 MR. DONALDSON: That's straight, that's straight --

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Where it's (indiscernible)  
17 cross-section.

18 MR. DONALDSON: -- like you're looking at it standing on  
19 the road, like you're standing on the road.

20 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

21 Q. Okay. I got you.

22 A. This is the second floor here, and this part was laying  
23 here and the victims were laying right on the end of this  
24 building.

25 Q. So you could see the two people?

1 A. No. I could only see a foot --

2 Q. Oh, you could see a foot.

3 A. -- of one.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. And we had to -- actually had to go dig the rubble out  
6 around it to -- for the firemen, so --

7 Q. Oh, you assisted with the --

8 A. So actually, you know, after we got doing what we was  
9 doing, we was actually pulled off to assist the firemen.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Far as like having to dig them out.

12 Q. Right.

13 A. Help dig them out.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. And they told us to just standby in case they needed us.  
16 So we were back over here with the firemen.

17 Q. Okay. So you did -- I just want to recap. You were  
18 doing the bar hole testing. You didn't excavate the main?

19 A. I didn't do it. Dan did it.

20 Q. Dan did it. Okay. Terrific.

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. And then you got pulled away to help with the search and  
23 rescue.

24 A. Yeah. We got pulled away over here, and actually we  
25 come back, and we cut the main right here and killed it.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The service, you mean?

2 MR. DONALDSON: I mean the service.

3 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. After -- I mean, this has been out for several hours.

6 Q. Right.

7 A. But they told us to come over here and dig this up and  
8 kill it. We killed it right there and bullheaded each end.

9 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. Terrific. Thanks.

10 Ravi, you want to --

11 MR. CHHATRE: Yes, sir. You did that (indiscernible).

12 I have no questions about the sketch.

13 MR. NICHOLSON: No more on the sketch he did?

14 MR. CHHATRE: No.

15 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. You can have a seat then.

16 BY MR. CHHATRE:

17 Q. For the record, this is Ravi. I've got several  
18 questions for you, Mike. How many people on your crew typically?

19 A. Me and Pete. Just two on my crew.

20 Q. Two people on the crew. Okay.

21 A. Pete Stokes.

22 Q. Okay. Now just for the record, are you OQ qualified  
23 operator?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Okay. You are. Now you said you do work on the

1 underground and aboveground maintenance of these leaks and one is  
2 when the dispatcher calls you or the survey crew calls you, and  
3 the survey crew is contracted?

4 A. No. Southern Cross will call the dispatcher and the  
5 dispatcher will just --

6 Q. Okay. So you -- so no matter what --

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. -- it's the dispatcher that gives you the directions.

9 A. Yeah. Dispatcher or the boss, one of them.

10 Q. Okay. So there is no in-house survey crew? Do you know  
11 that? If you don't know, you don't know, but I'm just trying  
12 to --

13 A. In-house survey crew?

14 Q. Do you have one or you don't?

15 A. No. I don't think so.

16 Q. Okay. And what kind of training is given to you as a --  
17 you said journeyman?

18 A. What --

19 Q. Apprentice journeyman, is that what you said?

20 A. Yeah. We have training every 3 months, every --

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. We have assessments. I'm an apprentice right now, so I  
23 have it every 3 months. Of course, I've been on light duty. When  
24 you go on light duty, you're actually shut off until you get back  
25 on full duty.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. So I'm a year behind. I'm probably at 18 months.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. I think that's my next assessment.

5 Q. Okay. And so after you -- if you complete all the  
6 successful assignments, then what your title will be?

7 A. You have to take a test. If you pass that test, then  
8 you're a journeyman.

9 Q. Okay. And you said you can do the bar hole test?

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. And you are qualified for that also?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Okay. And how do you -- what instrument do you use for  
14 the bar hole test?

15 A. What equipment?

16 Q. Um-hum.

17 A. We use a GMI.

18 Q. Okay. And do you carry that GMI with you now?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. It's in truck?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Okay. And do you know when it was calibrated last?

23 A. Not the exact date, but a co-worker borrowed it, and it  
24 was zero faulting and he had it -- I don't know if he had it  
25 calibrated, but he carried it in there and tested it and it

1 didn't -- it passed, so --

2 Q. Oh, it passed?

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. And that was last week.

6 Q. Oh, okay. And you said when you arrived, while you are  
7 locating the service, you guys saw the gas bubbling out of that  
8 leak location?

9 A. We saw it after we had the fire put out. Yes.

10 Q. Okay. But that is after you isolated the service or cut  
11 the service off or before?

12 A. Before.

13 Q. So before you cut the service off, you could see the  
14 bubbles --

15 A. Right.

16 Q. -- coming up? Okay. And there was no gas coming out  
17 near the service at that time. You didn't see any?

18 A. Uh-uh.

19 Q. Did you do any bar hole testing on the opposite side of  
20 the street? In your drawing, it would be coming -- going toward  
21 the floor?

22 A. You talking about --

23 MR. NICHOLSON: Be north on this diagram.

24 MR. CHHATRE: Yeah.

25 BY MR. CHHATRE:

1 Q. There are structures on this side of the road too,  
2 right?

3 A. The only bar testing we did is there where that patch  
4 is.

5 Q. Right.

6 A. What we showed you there. It's on --

7 Q. But nothing on the other side to see if the gas is going  
8 that building also?

9 A. No, did not.

10 MR. NICHOLSON: He's saying over on the north side.

11 MR. DONALDSON: Did not.

12 MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Are you asking him specifically  
14 if he did? You're not asking for the whole company?

15 MR. DONALDSON: I don't know --

16 MR. CHHATRE: No, whether he did that, he did some other  
17 part of the testing.

18 MR. DONALDSON: Yeah. I don't know if somebody else  
19 did, but I didn't. I didn't.

20 MR. CHHATRE: I understand. I understand. No, I  
21 understand.

22 MR. DONALDSON: I didn't.

23 MR. CHHATRE: We will get a map from you on that, so --

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Sure. Certainly.

25 MR. CHHATRE: Because if he had done it, then I was



1 going to ask him to write down the numbers. That was the reason.

2 MR. NICHOLSON: Well, that's a question. Were you  
3 writing down the numbers you were getting?

4 MR. DONALDSON: No.

5 MR. NICHOLSON: Were you recording it? No.

6 MR. DONALDSON: No.

7 MR. NICHOLSON: Just take a reading, moving to the next  
8 one? Okay.

9 MR. DONALDSON: I've never even heard of recording a  
10 reading. And it may be, you know, it may be procedure to do it on  
11 something like this, but when you got something like that going on  
12 I wouldn't think, you know, you would do that. I mean, I remember  
13 the readings by taking them.

14 BY MR. CHHATRE:

15 Q. Oh, okay. So what kind of formal training the company  
16 gives you?

17 A. Yeah. They give us formal training.

18 Q. And can you tell -- list some of the classes or what  
19 training?

20 A. We do fire training. We do pipehorn training, leak  
21 investigation training.

22 Q. And can you elaborate what leak investigation training  
23 will involve?

24 A. Yeah. It teaches you how to find leaks.

25 Q. Okay. And that will be a physical way of doing it or --

1           A.    It's just classroom but -- it's classroom but --  
2           Q.    And what --  
3           A.    -- somewhat self-explanatory.  
4           Q.    Okay.  
5           A.    You know.  
6           Q.    And is it like an in-house training, like computer --  
7 multiple questions and you answer the questions? Is that --  
8           A.    That's correct. That --  
9           Q.    Okay.  
10          A.    -- it's sort of like OQ, but they also have a guy that  
11 comes in there that teaches you.  
12          Q.    Okay.  
13          A.    And this is done every year.  
14          Q.    Every year.  
15          A.    Yeah.  
16          Q.    And what does the fire training involved?  
17          A.    It teaches you how to put out fires and the difference  
18 between a riser fire, a main fire or, you know, that sort of  
19 stuff.  
20          Q.    Okay. Now did you know what the material was for the  
21 service line? I mean, I think you know that --  
22          A.    Steel.  
23          Q.    It was steel service, not a cast iron?  
24          A.    It was bare steel.  
25          Q.    Okay.

1 A. The service line.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Um-hum. The service line.

3 MR. DONALDSON: Bare steel.

4 BY MR. CHHATRE:

5 Q. Bare steel. Okay. And somebody told you that, or you  
6 knew from the drawing or --

7 A. No, I dug it up.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. I dug it up.

10 Q. Okay. And you could tell by looking at the pipe that  
11 it's steel and not cast iron?

12 A. Sure can.

13 Q. Okay. And can you educate me how you do that compared  
14 to cast iron?

15 A. How would I do it?

16 Q. I mean, how will you know -- what are the differences  
17 between steel and cast iron?

18 A. You would never have a cast iron service.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Never seen one.

21 Q. Never seen one. Okay. So --

22 A. It's either going to be galvanized or it will be steel.  
23 It will be -- even mill wrap or coated steel is still going to be  
24 steel, or plastic.

25 Q. Okay.

1           A.    And it was inch and a half.

2           Q.    Okay.

3           A.    Inch and a half steel.

4           Q.    Okay.

5           A.    Bare steel.  No, I take that back.  It was an inch and a  
6 half mill wrap.

7           Q.    Okay.  Inch and half, what is it?

8           A.    Mill wrap, because we --

9           Q.    Mill wrap.  Okay.  Mill wrap.

10          A.    Mill wrap.

11          Q.    Okay.  Now since the accident, did you and Pete or other  
12 crew members, did you have any discussion like what I call post-  
13 accident meeting as to what went right, what went wrong, how you  
14 could improve the things?  Did things go right?  Something did not  
15 go wrong?

16          A.    You talking about far as what we did or what could have  
17 prevented that?

18          Q.    Yeah -- no, not prevented.  You responded to a scene.  
19 You know, how did the response go?  Did you kind of analyze to  
20 see --

21          A.    Well, I think it went -- except for trying to find that  
22 service, I think it went pretty well.

23          Q.    No, that's not what I meant.  I mean did you have a  
24 discussion amongst the people who responded, say a meeting kind  
25 of thing?

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: In other words, did you have a  
2 meeting afterwards to talk about it? That's what he's saying.

3 MR. DONALDSON: No.

4 BY MR. CHHATRE:

5 Q. No. Okay. Did you guys informally discuss whether  
6 you guys -- what -- how things went: right, wrong or what could  
7 have been improved, what could --

8 A. Oh, yeah. We talked among each other.

9 Q. Okay. And what was the consensus?

10 A. Well, one of the things we talked about is why they had  
11 been reporting this leak for 3 weeks and we didn't get no calls on  
12 it. Why was it reported to the Housing Authority, and the Housing  
13 Authority did not contact us?

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. This could have been prevented.

16 Q. Okay. But, I mean, who said they were reporting for  
17 three weeks?

18 A. The daughter of the victim.

19 Q. Oh.

20 MR. NICHOLSON: I'm not sure we've heard that.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Now what have you heard?

22 MR. NICHOLSON: Can you elaborate a little? Was this  
23 in -- did you read this in the newspaper or --

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Tell them what happened.

25 MR. DONALDSON: We got a call in Roebuck. We went out

1   there, we investigated that leak. We left there, and I wanted to  
2   stop at a store to get a drink. Well, we ended up -- two or three  
3   stores were closed, so I said -- I told Pete -- he was driving. I  
4   said, "Look, just drive over there to McDonald's."

5               We walked in, had our Alagasco stuff on, and the lady  
6   that waited on us said, "Hey, that was my daddy they pulled out of  
7   the rubble." And I said, "Man, I hate something like that would  
8   have happened."

9               She said, "Well, look," she said, "it ain't you all's  
10   fault." She said they'd been calling the Housing Authority for 3  
11   weeks reporting this leak and they have done nothing about it.  
12   And we actually got the receipt where we had bought stuff and -- I  
13   guess I'm --

14              UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah. No, that's fine. No, go  
15   ahead. That's fine.

16              MR. NICHOLSON: It's fine. You know, we --

17              MR. DONALDSON: He's got the receipt what time we were  
18   there and everything.

19              MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

20              MR. NICHOLSON: And this -- I'm sorry -- this person  
21   said they were the daughter of --

22              MR. DONALDSON: Daughter of the victim.

23              MR. NICHOLSON: -- the man that was pinned in the --

24              UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Of the man that was removed.  
25   Yes.

1           MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. All right. Okay. We hadn't  
2 heard that.

3           BY MR. CHHATRE:

4           Q. And that person in McDonald's, you said?

5           A. In McDonald's in Roebuck.

6           Q. And when was that?

7           A. When was it? It was Monday --

8           UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: This happened on Tuesday. The  
9 incident was Tuesday morning.

10          MR. DONALDSON: Yeah. It was Tuesday morning.

11          UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So it would have been --

12          MR. DONALDSON: Tuesday morning. No, no --

13          UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No. It would have been Wednesday  
14 morning.

15          MR. DONALDSON: Wednesday morning.

16          MR. CHHATRE: Wednesday morning. Okay.

17          MR. NICHOLSON: For three weeks she said?

18          MR. DONALDSON: My whole deal is, and I may be speaking  
19 out of turn, but if they're -- the Housing Authority's getting  
20 reports of gas inside the building, why haven't they --

21          MR. CHHATRE: Right. And that's good. Because we will  
22 check with Housing Authority.

23          MR. NICHOLSON: We hadn't heard this, so --

24          BY MR. CHHATRE:

25          Q. But she didn't say whom they talked at the Housing

1 Authority? Did she say -- mention any name or just the Housing  
2 Authority?

3 A. Housing Authority all she said.

4 Q. Um-hum.

5 A. And she said -- she told me that the Housing Authority  
6 was -- has done reports and wrote it up, and she said the Housing  
7 Authority was trying to save money, they didn't want to call  
8 Alagasco. Now that's what she told us. But --

9 Q. And we appreciate -- you can re-tell what she told you,  
10 you know what I'm saying.

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. You say -- you used the word, and maybe I didn't get it.  
13 You said Roebuck, Roebuck or something?

14 A. R-o-e-b-u-c-k, Roebuck.

15 Q. I'm sorry. R-o?

16 A. -e-b-u-c-k.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's just a little community in  
18 the Birmingham area.

19 MR. DONALDSON: Roebuck.

20 MR. CHHATRE: Oh, Roebuck. And that's where the  
21 McDonald's is?

22 MR. DONALDSON: Right.

23 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. I'm sorry. The way I heard it, I  
24 thought maybe it's some kind of book or something. Okay.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's another one of our 99



1 neighborhoods.

2 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Okay.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All in Birmingham.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All in -- it's all in Birmingham,  
5 but one of our 99 --

6 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Okay.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- neighborhoods.

8 MR. DONALDSON: Do you know what kind of chance that is  
9 for that to happen?

10 MR. CHHATRE: Sure.

11 MR. DONALDSON: One in a million, in a million.

12 MR. CHHATRE: Yeah.

13 MR. NICHOLSON: Pretty amazing, you know, a person that  
14 was on scene meeting a relative of a victim.

15 MR. DONALDSON: It's just because I wanted a double  
16 cheeseburger.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did you get the -- that person's  
18 name at the McDonald's?

19 MR. DONALDSON: I did not. I did not, but I have her --  
20 he has the receipt that --

21 MR. NICHOLSON: Well, we'll --

22 MR. CHHATRE: No, we'll get it. I mean because --

23 MR. NICHOLSON: -- we would like the copy of the  
24 receipt.

25 MR. DONALDSON: Yeah.

1           MR. CHHATRE: -- the reason we are asking is that way in  
2 case if we had to -- I mean, I don't know whether he has one  
3 daughter or two daughters, so we could -- that's the  
4 whole purpose. It's not like we are questioning whether or not,  
5 but we just like to narrow the search so we can quickly get the  
6 information and while we are here maybe talk to her.

7           MR. DONALDSON: Good idea.

8           BY MR. CHHATRE:

9           Q. Yeah. So, but did you guys have -- so you guys  
10 discussed that, but did you guys discuss that with the management  
11 or the Housing Authority or anybody like that?

12          A. Only people we talked to is our bosses and our  
13 co-workers.

14          Q. Okay.

15          A. We didn't talk to nobody at the Housing Authority.

16          Q. Okay.

17          A. Or tenants.

18          Q. Yeah. The other tenants, other tenants, you mean?

19          A. Yeah, we didn't talk to any of those people.

20          Q. Okay. Okay.

21          A. It was so much confusion going on we -- me and Pete,  
22 after we had done some -- pretty much what we could do, we were  
23 kind of pulled back over with the fire department to help those --

24          Q. Oh, I can fully understand the kind of situation you  
25 guys are in --

1           A.    Yeah.

2           Q.    -- chaotic situation.

3           A.    Pete was actually digging the rubble out around the  
4 victim. And I was watching for him, make sure he didn't get on  
5 him.

6           Q.    But did you guys talk amongst yourself and since all you  
7 guys are kind of doing a leak survey, leak detection, leaks fixing  
8 and repairs and all that, did you guys kind of have discussion as  
9 to what might have caused the leak?

10          A.    I have no idea what would have caused that. I mean --

11          Q.    Okay. And I'm not saying you have an idea. I'm saying  
12 was it discussed, the whole --

13          A.    Not that I know of.

14          Q.    Okay. Was that discussed within the company? I mean,  
15 did you guys have a meeting of the crew who went to the scene, the  
16 postmortem, if you would?

17          A.    Have no --

18          Q.    No meeting with the company?

19          A.    -- no meetings.

20          Q.    Okay. So I guess if you had no meeting, then there will  
21 be no lessons learned type of meeting from the incident either?

22          A.    I'm not sure what you're -- what you mean --

23          Q.    Well, I'm saying like particularly the fire department  
24 after the incident most -- they will have a kind of get-together  
25 for everybody who participated and kind of do lessons learning,

1 what things went right, so -- and what things could be improved,  
2 or if something didn't go right, then, you know, how next time you  
3 can make it right.

4 A. Yeah. Well, we --

5 Q. Kind of a self-evaluation, if you would.

6 A. Yeah. We haven't had it yet. I'm not saying we won't  
7 have one, but so far we haven't had one.

8 Q. But, I mean, that's what -- no, I understand. I'm just  
9 saying did you have any -- while the memory's fresh is when you  
10 have your meeting, so --

11 A. Well, we've been out since 11, so they sent us home  
12 about 1:00.

13 Q. Oh, I can imagine the hours. Believe me.

14 Now you mentioned the rupture looked fresh, meaning  
15 there was no hard ball --

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. -- around it. Now have you seen leaks and ruptures like  
18 this where you can see the hard ball and --

19 A. Bunches.

20 Q. And on a cast-iron pipe?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Any in the neighborhood where the incident was?

23 A. No. First time I've been there.

24 Q. In that neighborhood? Okay. And would that be like a  
25 Class 1, Class 2 --

1           A.    Yes.

2           Q.    -- Class 3 or all of them?

3           A.    That break would be called a Grade 1.

4           Q.    Grade 1.  Okay.  But no, I'm talking about like that

5   hard ball --

6           A.    Yeah.

7           Q.    -- formation, will that be in Grade 1, Grade 2 and

8   Grade 3 --

9           A.    It would be a Grade --

10          Q.    -- depending upon how long it happens?

11          A.    Grade 1.  Grade 1.

12          Q.    Okay.

13          A.    Anytime you got something that's -- endangers person,

14   property, it's going to be Grade 1.

15          Q.    Grade 1.  Okay.  So on a pipe -- I'm going -- crack or

16   rupture or whatever word you want to use, but leak, how do you

17   classify -- or would you classify the Grade 1, Grade 2, Grade 3

18   leak?

19          A.    If it endangers person, property or --

20          Q.    Okay.  But really is it an LEL reading?  Is there like

21   population requirement or --

22          A.    It depends on where it is and what it is.

23          Q.    Sure.

24          A.    You could have 95 percent gas out in the middle of the

25   field; it would not be a Grade 1.

1 Q. Yeah. Because --

2 A. If you got 90 -- you could have 15 percent up against a  
3 house or 5 percent up against the house; it's a Grade 1.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. So it depends on what the situation is.

6 Q. And you guys have guidance, guidelines for that?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. And have you -- you said you have done the bar hole  
11 tests at other locations?

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. And have you done the aboveground survey?

14 A. No. That --

15 Q. That you have not.

16 A. -- don't really concern us. That's a serviceman. They  
17 somewhat do that end --

18 Q. They will do the aboveground.

19 A. Southern Cross would do the survey and -- we actually  
20 have a crew that -- you asked me about in-house. We have -- yeah,  
21 we do have an in-house crew that surveys. They have certain areas  
22 that they survey.

23 Q. Sure.

24 A. Far as -- I told you no, but we do.

25 Q. Oh, that's okay. I mean, there's nothing --

1           A.    We do have --

2           Q.    -- nothing wrong correcting.  I mean, you know, we --

3           A.    Yeah.  We do have one.

4           Q.    Okay.  So in terms of your assignment as a crew who does  
5   repairs, so you only go when somebody identifies a location for  
6   you to fix it?

7           A.    Yes, correct.

8           Q.    You don't -- if odor complaint comes, you wouldn't go  
9   and do the bar hole testing in the area and --

10          A.    If we get an odor complaint, we go check it out.  We see  
11   what -- see if we can find something.

12          Q.    Okay.  So you will go and find it?

13          A.    Yes.

14          Q.    You won't send some other crew to locate it for you?

15          A.    No.  We'll do it.

16          Q.    Okay.

17          A.    Dispatcher call us, say hey, we got a 40 percent over  
18   the main at this address.  We'll go check it, see what it is.  If  
19   it's safe or a Grade 2, we'll leave it.  If we find it's a Grade  
20   1, we'll fix it.

21          Q.    Okay.  And last question before I hand over to somebody,  
22   what are your normal duty hours?  What are the normal duty hours  
23   for you, like 8 to 4:30 or --

24          A.    At this point it's 11 to 7.  I'm actually on dayshift,  
25   but they run an 11 to 7 crew in the winter, and I took the 11 to 7

1 crew.

2 Q. I apologize, but 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. is in the winter, and

3 then --

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. -- then the time changes in the spring and summer?

6 A. Yeah. After --

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You say 11A to 7P or is it --

8 MR. DONALDSON: No. It's 11 p.m. to --

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- P to 7A?

10 BY MR. CHHATRE:

11 Q. Oh, that's what I was asking.

12 A. 11 p.m. to 7 a.m.

13 Q. Okay. 11 p.m. to 7 --

14 A. Actually, it's 7:30 p.m.

15 Q. Okay.

16 MR. NICHOLSON: AM, right?

17 BY MR. CHHATRE:

18 Q. AM.

19 A. AM.

20 Q. That's fine. I got it.

21 A. You see what 11 to 7 does for you?

22 Q. Yeah, I know. I know. But, you know, in this case,

23 this might help us.

24 A. Um-hum.

25 Q. And this is winter, but what happens in the rest of the



1 time, the rest of the year?

2 A. We work dayshift.

3 Q. And there is no nightshift or you --

4 A. Yes. They have a 2:30 to 11:30 shift. And if they need  
5 somebody during the summer -- see, you have less calls in the  
6 summer. So what you do is if something comes in, they'll call  
7 somebody in.

8 Q. No. I apologize. It's been a long day. But I'm a  
9 little confused. So in winter you're 11 p.m. to 7:30 a.m. And  
10 what about the other shift? You are working the night. Do they  
11 have a dayshift or there is no dayshift?

12 A. Yeah. They have a dayshift.

13 Q. And what that will be?

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What's the dayshift in the  
15 summer?

16 MR. DONALDSON: It's 7:30 to 4 p.m.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: 7:30A to 4:30P.

18 MR. CHHATRE: 7:30A to 4:30P.

19 MR. DONALDSON: And they have another crew that comes in  
20 at 2:30.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And goes until 11:30.

22 MR. DONALDSON: Right.

23 MR. CHHATRE: 2:30P to 11 --

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: P to 11:30P.

25 MR. CHHATRE: P. Okay.

1 BY MR. CHHATRE:

2 Q. And no crew then after 11:30?

3 A. No. Unless they have an emergency, and if they do  
4 they'll call somebody in.

5 Q. Sure. But only two shifts during the spring and summer?

6 A. Right.

7 Q. In the winter, you have one shift 11P to 7:30A. And is  
8 there a dayshift? If you don't know, you don't know. I mean I'm  
9 just --

10 MR. DONALDSON: Is there a dayshift?

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Is there a dayshift in the  
12 wintertime that other construction --

13 MR. CHHATRE: Other crew comes in?

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

15 MR. DONALDSON: Yeah. Every day.

16 BY MR. CHHATRE:

17 Q. And do you know the time? Or if you don't know the  
18 time, that's fine. Do you know what the time --

19 A. They come in at 7:30 a.m. --

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. -- and work to 4:30 p.m.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. Or 4 p.m.

24 Q. Okay. Thank you so much.

25 A. You're welcome.

1 Q. Appreciate it.

2 MR. NICHOLSON: I'm sorry. Now does that mean from 4  
3 p.m. to 11 p.m. nothing, or --

4 MR. DONALDSON: 4 p.m. -- no. They have a crew that  
5 comes in at 2:30.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: 2:30.

7 MR. NICHOLSON: Oh, okay. I thought that was --

8 MR. DONALDSON: They have two crews --

9 MR. NICHOLSON: -- spring and summer. Okay.

10 MR. DONALDSON: They have two crews that come in at 2:30  
11 and work till 11:30.

12 MR. NICHOLSON: Got you.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: There's some overlap.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, there's overlap.

15 MR. NICHOLSON: No. Yeah, I'm good with that. Okay.  
16 Okay. Are you finished, Ravi?

17 MR. CHHATRE: Yes, I'm done.

18 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. Willie, any questions?

19 BY MR. WILLIAMS:

20 Q. Did you speak to anyone else about possible leaks other  
21 than that one that you guys found, any other residence?

22 A. Uh-uh. No.

23 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. Don?

24 BY MR. LUPO:

25 Q. What was the -- the McDonald's that you're talking

1 about, was that the one that sits I think on what's Gadsden  
2 Highway, it sits up on the hill?

3 A. That's correct. It's the one right off the interstate.  
4 When you get off the interstate, it will be right there on the  
5 right.

6 Q. So it's Gadsden Highway at Roebuck --

7 A. Right in the fork.

8 Q. Yeah. Okay. Sits up on that little hill.

9 A. Yes.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Remember when the big slide was  
11 there?

12 MR. LUPO: Yeah.

13 MR. DONALDSON: Yes, sir.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Big slide.

15 MR. LUPO: Okay.

16 MR. NICHOLSON: Is that it?

17 Bob?

18 MR. GARDNER: I don't have anything.

19 MR. NICHOLSON: Keith, Wallace?

20 BY MR. JONES:

21 Q. Yeah. Mike, you were talking earlier about you all were  
22 taking bar test holes, and you didn't record the readings. I'm  
23 just -- I'm curious as to why no readings were recorded, because  
24 how do you pinpoint a leak if you don't record the readings  
25 somehow?

1           A.    I mean, how would -- what -- how would you record it?

2   In other words, you talking about writing --

3           Q.    Either on paper or put them on the ground so you got  
4   your readings so you know, okay, a few minutes ago we were at this  
5   level and now we're seeing --

6           A.    What we'll do is we use a GMI to find the -- what we  
7   call a hot hole, whichever has got the most gas. And we even do  
8   soap tests. We'll put soap over the top of that. If it blows a  
9   bubble, what we will do is we'll take yellow paint and we'll  
10   circle that hole right there. Then we'll just keep going back and  
11   forth, putting more bar holes down. But we tighten it up until we  
12   pinpoint it.

13                I've never even heard of taking recordings like on paper  
14   or anything. So what we do is basically -- I mean, we just do it  
15   by -- I mean, that's our job. I mean, we -- if we're getting  
16   95 percent, we know where the leak's going to be, you know,  
17   somewhat. We miss them sometimes, but most of the time that GMI  
18   will tell us exactly where that leak is.

19               MR. JONES:   Okay. Bob, we need to check you-all's  
20   procedures to find out if recording of bar test hole readings is  
21   part of your procedures. Especially in a situation like this, I  
22   think it's very, very --

23               MR. NICHOLSON:   Wait, wait. I'm sorry. Are we making  
24   an information request or --

25               MR. JONES:   Yes, I am making an information request --

1           MR. GARDNER: Are you making one of me or this is an  
2 NTSB request?

3           MR. JONES: I'm making an information request. I want  
4 to know from your --

5           MR. NICHOLSON: Let's -- I just want to hear --

6           MR. JONES: -- from your procedures does -- is it in  
7 your procedures anywhere that the bar test holes are to be  
8 recorded in any shape, form or fashion.

9           MR. DONALDSON: Now if we --

10          MR. JONES: Especially in an emergency situation such as  
11 this.

12          MR. DONALDSON: Now if we come -- if we pull up on a  
13 leak and we're getting say -- say we get 40 percent gas that's  
14 nonthreatening or not migrating or something, we'll put that in  
15 our reports. But far as writing it down on paper, I've never --  
16 we've never done that. I mean --

17          MR. GARDNER: You record the ratings you find on the  
18 leak sheet. So Southern Cross hands you a leak sheet, and you go  
19 out and you verify, you take your readings, and you put your  
20 reading down. Say we got 30 percent gas --

21          MR. DONALDSON: If Southern Cross --

22          MR. GARDNER: -- and then you draw it up. It's -- your  
23 reading is going to be on there. What we're saying is why you  
24 wouldn't do that on the --

25          MR. DONALDSON: We do it on our computer. We do that on

1 our computer. But I'm thinking you're talking about if I go out  
2 there on a leak and I -- yeah, I guess we do record them. But we  
3 do it on a computer. We don't do it on a piece of paper. But  
4 what we'll do --

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think what Wallace is talking  
6 about is he's talking about in this situation, do you do something  
7 where you draw on a piece of paper this hole I got this  
8 percentage, this hole I got this percentage?

9 MR. DONALDSON: No. We put it on our computer.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Something where we've got a  
11 record of --

12 MR. DONALDSON: Yes. We --

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- the migration pattern of the  
14 gas.

15 MR. DONALDSON: Yes, we do. Yes, we do. We do it on a  
16 computer, but I was thinking you was talking about that situation  
17 that we would go out there and we would write it down on a piece  
18 of paper on each hole --

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Sometimes you do and then you  
20 transfer it over to your computer?

21 MR. NICHOLSON: That's where it's confusing --

22 MR. DONALDSON: Yes.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The main thing is that some kind  
24 of record is kept of your migration pattern to show we found the  
25 gas here, but we also had migration up to this point.

1 MR. DONALDSON: Yes. Yes, we do.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And after we fixed the leak, we  
3 went back and checked --

4 MR. DONALDSON: Correct.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- and we no longer had that  
6 migration of gas.

7 MR. DONALDSON: That's correct. But Southern Cross  
8 gives us a call, it's going to be a Grade 1.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

10 MR. DONALDSON: It's going to be -- say they give you a  
11 call, you've got 20 percent in a water box. We'll have to find  
12 that leak and fix it. If Southern Cross gives us a leak, we have  
13 to fix it.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. But you're putting, you're  
15 putting your readings into your computer.

16 MR. DONALDSON: Correct.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. That's what we, that's  
18 what we need -- that's what we wanted to make sure.

19 MR. NICHOLSON: So that -- what we just talked about is  
20 a typical leak callout for you. But we're saying during this  
21 incident, you weren't doing any of that?

22 MR. DONALDSON: No.

23 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. Because this was different. This  
24 was -- okay.

25 MR. CHHATRE: Just one item, Bob, is we'd like to get a



1 copy of the receipt, the McDonald's receipt with the name of that  
2 person?

3 MR. NICHOLSON: Yeah. I think --

4 MR. GARDNER: Did we get the name of the person?

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh, he don't know the name of the  
6 person. Do you?

7 MR. DONALDSON: Don't know -- didn't know the name.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You know, I'm trying to think.  
9 Was she the person who rung up the order?

10 MR. DONALDSON: That's correct. She was a cashier.

11 MR. NICHOLSON: Well, I think that -- where's the  
12 receipt? It would have the cashier's number or --

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, yeah. I got it.

14 MR. NICHOLSON: -- something on --

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah. That's what I'm --

16 MR. NICHOLSON: We'll have to take it to the --

17 MR. CHHATRE: So we'd like to get that. And if you can  
18 get the location of that McDonald's, if you know --

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh, I know exactly. That's what  
20 they were saying, Gadsden Highway and Huffman Road is it called?

21 MR. CHHATRE: Right.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think it's called --

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Roebuck Parkway.

24 MR. GARDNER: Roebuck Parkway.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Roebuck. That parking lot runs

1 east --

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Or is it Center Point Parkway?

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's Parkway East.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Parkway East. That's what it is.

5 MR. CHHATRE: Because what we'd like really to do is  
6 maybe talk to her as soon as we can. And the only way to do that  
7 is go to McDonald's --

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right.

9 MR. CHHATRE: -- and ask them to get the name of the  
10 person.

11 MR. NICHOLSON: Right.

12 MR. GARDNER: So let me make sure I understand. You  
13 want a copy of the receipt and a map of the location --

14 MR. CHHATRE: No. Just --

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, no just the receipt.

16 MR. CHHATRE: Address of the McDonald's.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I-59, get off on Roebuck Parkway  
18 East is it?

19 MR. NICHOLSON: Well, I'm thinking all that's on the  
20 receipt, isn't it, the address?

21 MR. CHHATRE: Address may not be, is what I'm thinking.

22 MR. DONALDSON: Should be. It should be the time and  
23 everything we were there.

24 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Oh, then we are fine. I mean, I  
25 just didn't know what the receipt will show. Because those

1 receipts are kind of, you know, really -- in next 3 days it will  
2 completely get -- ink might go away completely.

3 MR. DONALDSON: And she was there at 2:00 in the  
4 morning. So I'm sure she works probably 11 to 7, too.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, that's a 24/7 McDonald's,  
6 isn't it?

7 MR. DONALDSON: Yeah.

8 MR. CHHATRE: Oh, okay. Can we just --

9 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

10 Q. And I want to -- can I go back for a second? I'm  
11 thinking I'm confused here. Earlier we said Southern Cross does  
12 all the aboveground surveys for leaks and then we -- you came  
13 back, and you said well, no, we do have an internal department  
14 that does that. Where is the break -- for instance, Gate City,  
15 who -- was that a Southern Cross area? Were they responsible for  
16 leaks?

17 A. I have no idea.

18 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. Well, then I'm going to look at  
19 Bob. How does that delineation between your internal group and  
20 Southern Cross work?

21 MR. GARDNER: We have surveys that are scheduled surveys  
22 either on an annual or every 3 years or every 5 years that are  
23 performed by Southern Cross. We have other surveys that are done  
24 internally for certain classifications of pipe. If it's cast iron  
25 or unprotected steel, then that's on a -- that's considered a

1 business district in 192.

2 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

3 MR. GARDNER: Some of those are done -- we have overlap  
4 in some -- we over survey, number one.

5 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

6 MR. GARDNER: We do more than what the code requires.  
7 Our company personnel survey over all of our pipelines at  
8 different frequencies based on the pipe material. But they will  
9 survey those aboveground, and they will look at locations such as  
10 cracks in the pavement, manholes, anywhere where gas could  
11 migrate, primarily in areas where the gas lines are concentrated  
12 under pavement or concrete, and they'll do those on a frequency of  
13 every other month if it's cast iron or I think twice a year if  
14 it's in other locations. But it is specific towards a business  
15 district and business community like what you might see in this  
16 downtown area --

17 MR. NICHOLSON: Oh, okay.

18 MR. GARDNER: -- versus a community --

19 MR. NICHOLSON: I see.

20 MR. GARDNER: -- a public housing project would not be  
21 in that category. It would be in the category of being surveyed  
22 every 3 years.

23 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. Well, then --

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: As a residential --

25 MR. GARDNER: As a residential section.

1           MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. That makes sense. But then Mike  
2 went on to say, well, if he gets a call from Southern Cross, it's  
3 a Grade 1.

4           MR. GARDNER: Well, what happens is Southern Cross is  
5 our contractor for leak surveying. They've been told to call us  
6 if they find a --

7           MR. NICHOLSON: Oh, okay.

8           MR. GARDNER: -- Grade 1 leak, and we respond to that  
9 leak.

10          MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

11          MR. GARDNER: Just -- we would do the same thing if  
12 someone -- if our company crew found a Grade 1 leak, our company  
13 crew would call the same person. It's just that that survey they  
14 are doing for us requires action on our part if they find a  
15 Grade 1 leak.

16          MR. DONALDSON: Right.

17          MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

18          MR. CHHATRE: This is Ravi again. The question then,  
19 who surveyed this area that -- where the incident happened?  
20 You -- these --

21          MR. GARDNER: At what point are you asking me that? In  
22 the immediate, in the immediate --

23          MR. CHHATRE: No. I thought you said cast iron lines  
24 are surveyed by your department?

25          MR. NICHOLSON: He's talking prior to the accident.

1 MR. CHHATRE: Right.

2 MR. GARDNER: In general, they would have been  
3 surveyed -- we had several -- we've had some different leak  
4 surveyors over the years, but in general, it would be the third  
5 party unless someone in our company was responding to a specific  
6 "I smell gas" leak call.

7 MR. CHHATRE: Then -- okay.

8 MR. GARDNER: The routine survey would have been done by  
9 a third party with this community under our normal practice.

10 MR. CHHATRE: So this community will be under --

11 MR. GARDNER: It would be under our normal schedule,  
12 routine --

13 MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

14 MR. GARDNER: -- leak survey program.

15 MR. CHHATRE: And so the survey results you gave me the  
16 other day, or somebody did, they were from this Southern --

17 MR. GARDNER: That is correct.

18 MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

19 MR. GARDNER: The information we gave you on the -- I  
20 guess on the legal-size paper --

21 MR. CHHATRE: Right.

22 MR. GARDNER: -- was the last --

23 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Great.

24 MR. GARDNER: -- contract leak survey performed in that  
25 community.

1           MR. CHHATRE: All right. Okay, great. That's what I'm  
2 asking. Thank you.

3           MR. GARDNER: I hope that helps.

4           MR. NICHOLSON: That helps.

5           MR. CHHATRE: Yeah, thanks.

6           MR. NICHOLSON: All right. Do we have anything else for  
7 Mike? Keith? Wallace? Ravi?

8           MR. CHHATRE: No.

9           MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. At this point I think we'll  
10 conclude your interview. Thanks, Mike.

11          MR. DONALDSON: Thank you.

12          MR. CHHATRE: Thank you so much.

13          (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:           ALABAMA GAS CORPORATION (ALAGASCO)  
                                  NATURAL GAS LEAK WITH IGNITION  
                                  BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA  
                                  DECEMBER 17, 2013  
                                  Interview of Michael Donaldson

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,  
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been compared to  
the recording accomplished at the hearing.

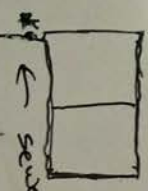
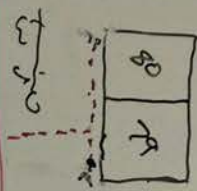
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Karen Ehatt  
Transcriber



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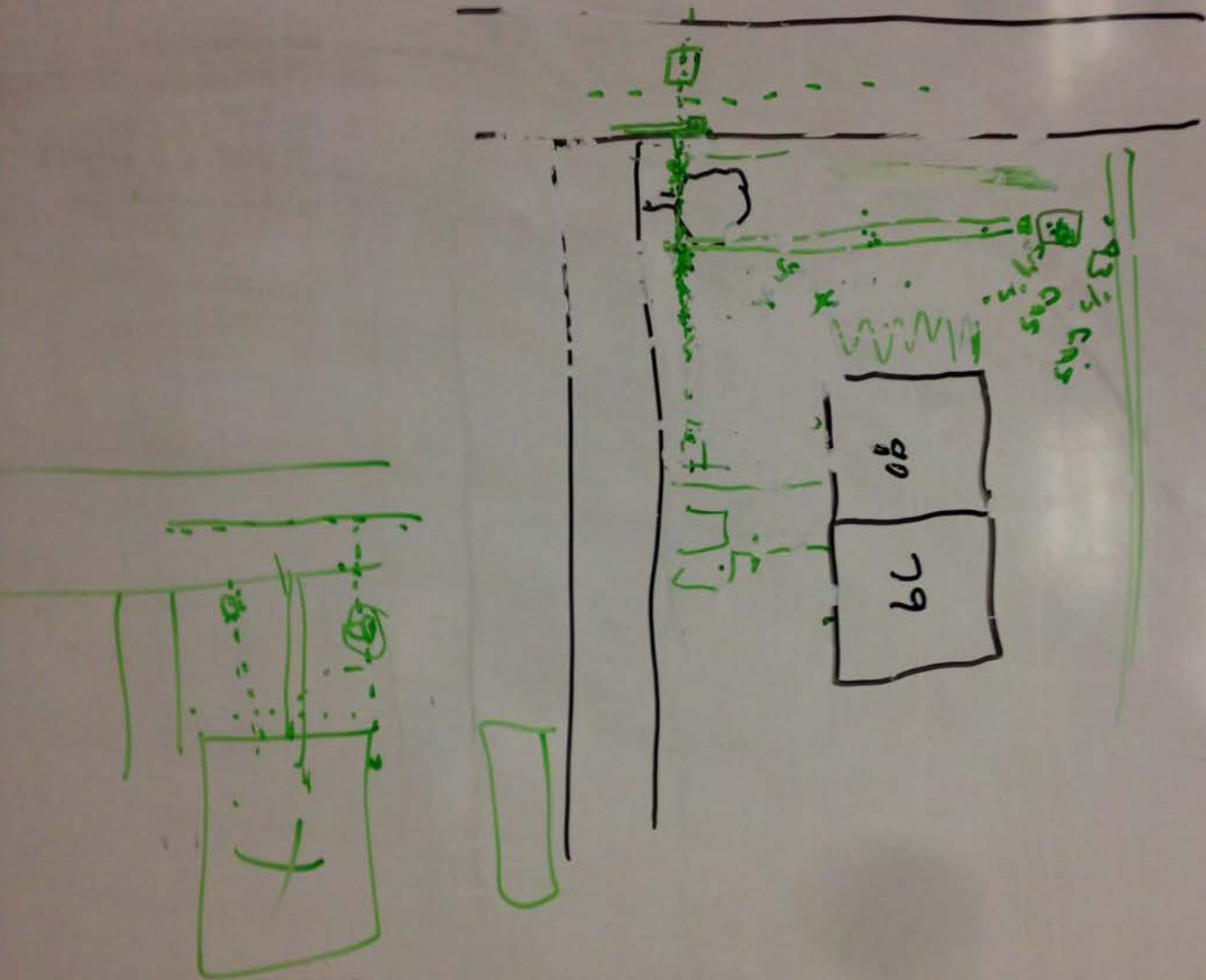


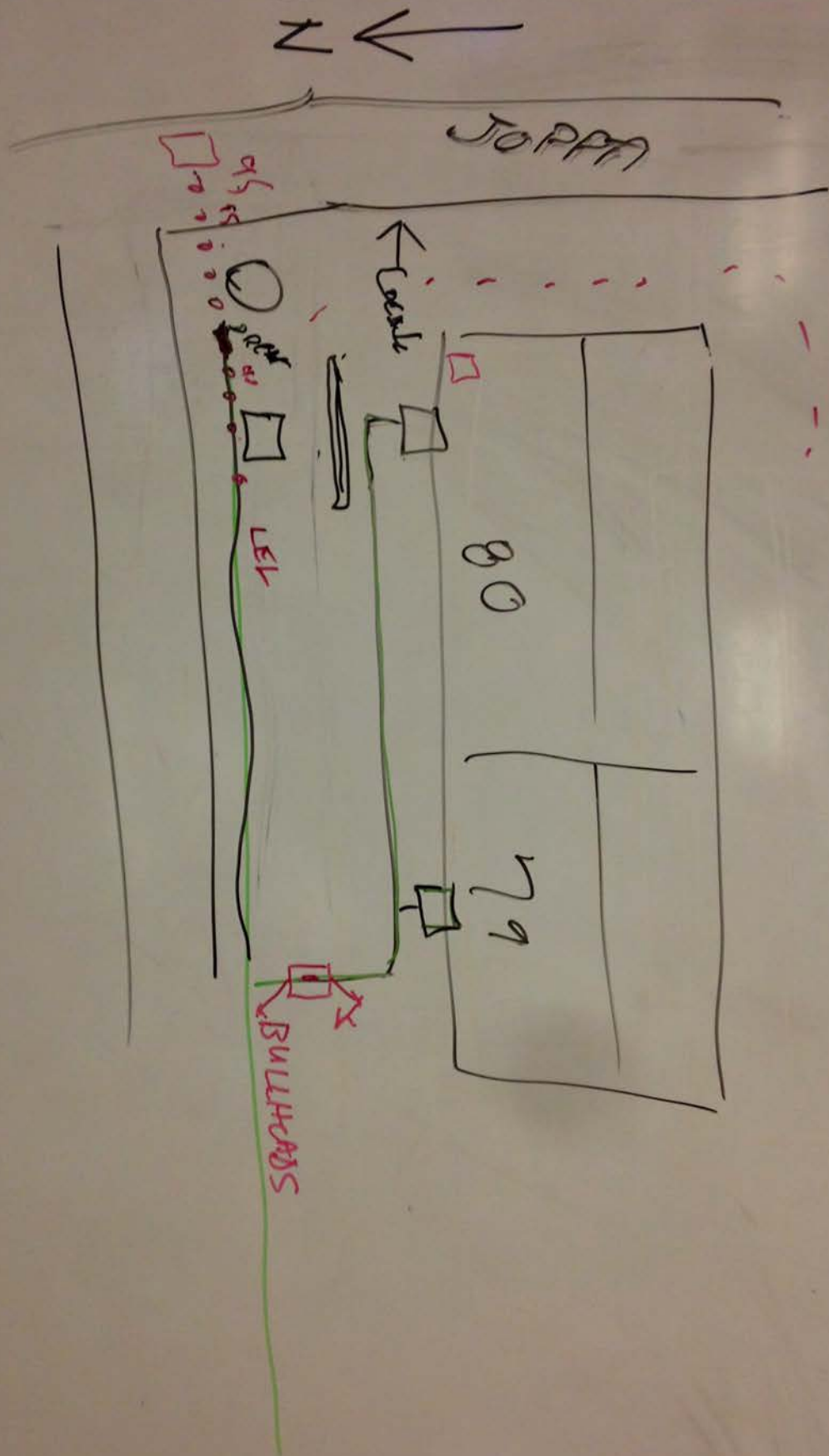
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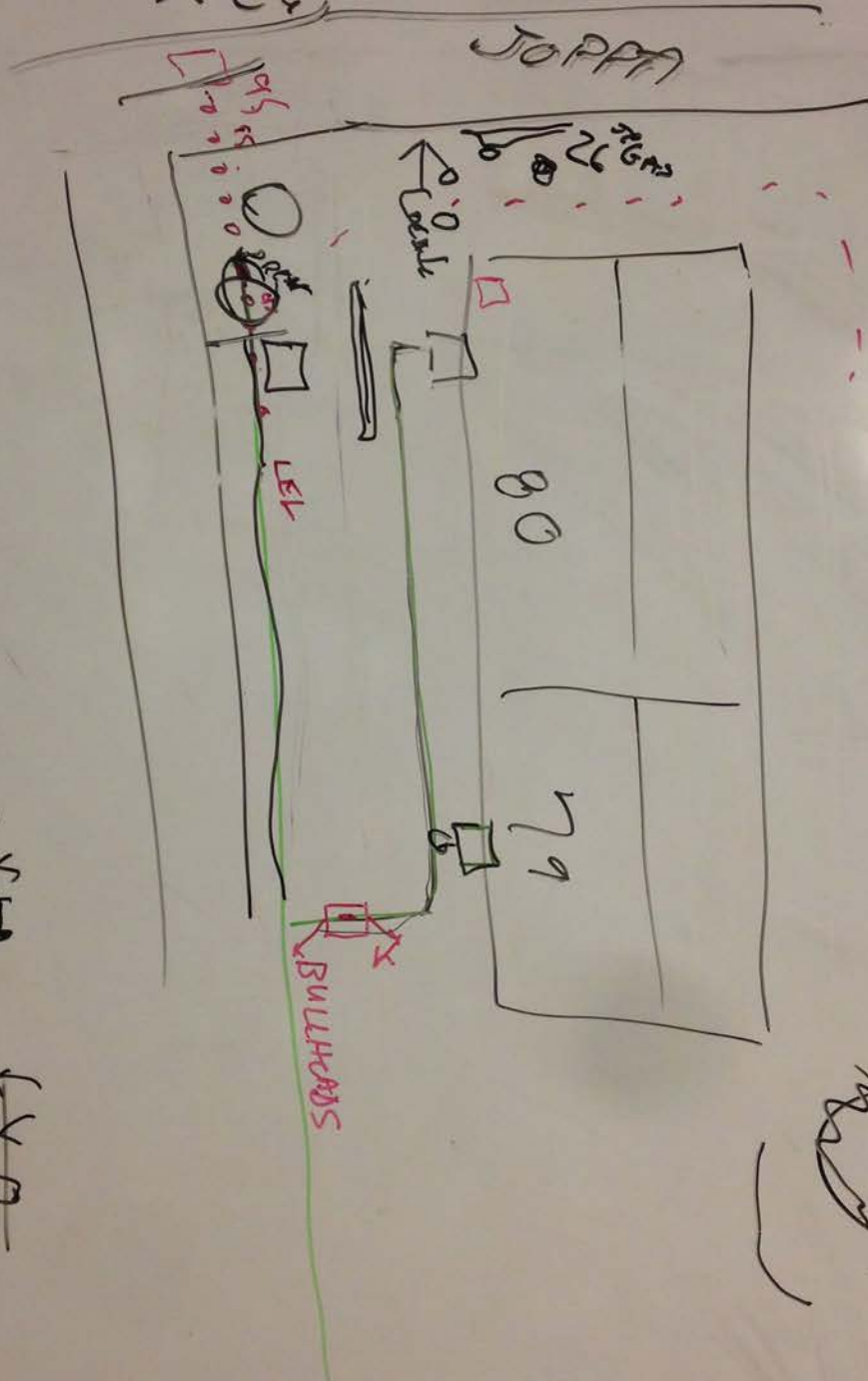






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