

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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ALABAMA GAS CORPORATION (ALAGASCO) *

NATURAL GAS RELEASE WITH IGNITION * Docket No.: DCA-14-MP-001

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA *

DECEMBER 17, 2013 *

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Interview of: MIXON RUSS

Alagasco Headquarters
Birmingham, Alabama

Monday,
July 14, 2014

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: MATTHEW NICHOLSON
Investigator-in-Charge

APPEARANCES:

MATTHEW NICHOLSON, Investigator-in-Charge
National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, D.C. 20594

RAVI CHHATRE, Accident Investigator
Pipeline Division
National Transportation Safety Board

WALLACE JONES, Administrator, Gas Pipeline Safety
Alabama Public Service Commission

BOB GARDNER, Director, Quality Assurance and Compliance
Alabama Gas Corporation (Alagasco)
(Party Representative)

MIKE BELL, Esq.
(Representative on behalf of Mixon Russ)

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. NICHOLSON: Good afternoon. Today is Monday,
3 July 14, 2014. My name is Matthew Nicholson. I am an
4 investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board in
5 Washington, D.C. We are at the Alagasco headquarters in
6 Birmingham, Alabama. This interview is being conducted as part of
7 the investigation into the natural gas distribution release and
8 ignition that occurred in Gate City, Birmingham, Alabama on
9 December 17, 2013. This is case number DCA-14-MP-001.

10 This interview is being recorded and may be transcribed
11 at a later date. A copy of the transcript will be provided to the
12 interviewee for review prior to being entered into the public
13 docket.

14 Mr. Russ, you are permitted to have one other person
15 present during this interview. This is a person of your choosing:
16 supervisor, friend, family, nobody at all. Please state for the
17 record who you have selected.

18 MR. RUSS: Okay. Mike --

19 MR. BELL: Bell. Come on, Mixon.

20 MR. RUSS: Mike Bell.

21 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. Thank you. And at this time, I
22 think I'd like to go around the room. Everyone introduce
23 themselves, your name, a spelling, title and agency or
24 organization you are representing.

25 I'll start and we'll proceed to my left. My name is

1 Matthew Nicholson, spelled M-a-t-t-h-e-w, N-i-c-h-o-l-s-o-n. I am
2 an investigator with the NTSB.

3 MR. CHHATRE: Ravi Chhatre, pipeline investigator, NTSB.
4 My information is provided on the card.

5 MR. BELL: Mike Bell, attorney representative for Mixon
6 Russ.

7 MR. RUSS: Mixon Russ, Director of Pipeline and Risk
8 Management. Mixon, M-i-x-o-n, Russ, R-u-s-s.

9 MR. JONES: Wallace Jones, W-a-l-l-a-c-e, J-o-n-e-s,
10 Administrator of Gas Pipeline Safety for the Alabama Public
11 Service Commission.

12 MR. GARDNER: Bob Gardner, Director of Quality Assurance
13 and Compliance, Alagasco, last name G-a-r-d-n-e-r.

14 INTERVIEW OF MIXON RUSS

15 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

16 Q. Okay. Mixon, I think just to begin with, maybe, tell us
17 how long you've been with Alagasco, what positions you've held
18 within Alagasco --

19 A. Okay. I've been with Alagasco 23 years. I started out
20 as a distribution engineer. I went from the state of distribution
21 engineer for 3 years and then I went to work in our Birmingham
22 division as a supervisor of Birmingham engineering. I left that
23 position and went to manager of our new construction for the
24 Birmingham area. And then manager of our southern operations and
25 from there manager of Metro operations, which is downtown

1 Birmingham. And then in 2007 -- well in 2003 went to our Selma
2 division as division manager and then 2007 went to our Tuscaloosa
3 division as division manager. And in 2011 came back to Birmingham
4 to work in our corporate office as director of pipeline risk
5 management.

6 Q. So you've been just about everywhere.

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Pretty impressive. So if you could just describe for us
9 in your current position what some of your duties are,
10 responsibilities, reports.

11 A. Well, as director of pipeline risk management we look at
12 making repair replaced decisions on our pipeline facilities. I'm
13 also responsible for our preventive maintenance, which includes
14 the corrosion, the investigation of corrosion department. I'm
15 also under, I mean, under our preventive maintenances, our leak
16 management where we schedule the leakage surveys and also track
17 our maintenance on our repairs.

18 And the other part, I'm also responsible for our damage
19 prevention and public awareness area and also the project
20 replacement for our pipeline.

21 Q. That's the cast iron replacement --

22 A. Yeah, cast iron and other replacements as far as, you
23 know, other bare steel or --

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. -- anything that's pipeline related.

1 Q. I didn't get this, what's your formal education?

2 A. Engineering, bachelor of science in engineering from the
3 University of Alabama Birmingham. Also an MBA degree from
4 University of Alabama Birmingham also.

5 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. Ravi, you want to go?

6 MR. CHHATRE: Yeah.

7 BY MR. CHHATRE:

8 Q. I want to try to clarify in my own mind, relationship
9 between your risk management and integrity management and how they
10 are related and interacting, again, really for the distribution
11 system.

12 A. Okay. As far as my area of risk management, look at,
13 you know, again my specific area would be making repair and
14 replace decisions on our cast iron and other pipeline in other
15 facilities. I also as a former risk management we looked at our
16 preventive maintenance program, which would include the leak
17 surveys, you know, kind of monitoring our system, any kind of
18 survey or monitoring that we do.

19 I also look at monitoring our regulators, you know, the
20 pressure regulators making sure that they're maintained properly,
21 and that's part of it. And again, our corrosion department
22 monitoring our corrosion equipment and systems.

23 Q. That would be start with repair and replacement program,
24 the gas distribution main and service --

25 A. Um-hum.

1 Q. -- including cast iron (indiscernible) bare steel. How
2 are decisions made when a report comes in about a leak? Walk me
3 through, how do you hear about a leak in certain pipeline and how
4 the process goes through and decisions made to repair or replace.

5 A. Okay.

6 Q. And you can start with cast iron. That's the big focus.

7 A. Yeah, okay. Well, you know, we don't look at them as
8 far as on a daily basis unless there is something out of the
9 ordinary. Leaks are repaired and unless they're, you know, out of
10 the ordinary, but they are repaired and then they are put into our
11 system of record, which is the SAP. And we do on a, kind of, a
12 yearly basis we pull that leak information and from that we do an
13 analysis to tell us where we are having problem areas and we make
14 our decisions to repair or replace based on the accumulated
15 leakage over a 10-year program is what we're looking at now.

16 Q. When you say 10-year program, meaning the pipes that you
17 identified were repair and replace in the next 10 years?

18 A. No, I'm sorry. The 10-year leak history.

19 MR. GARDNER: Backwards.

20 MR. RUSS: Right. We do a 10-year history on what has
21 happened in those areas as far as leakage and repairs we've made
22 over the last 10 years and based on the concentration of leakage
23 that enters into the repair and replace decision.

24 BY MR. CHHATRE:

25 Q. But not -- well, yeah, since you're responsible like

1 your labor for the system integrity and safety and all that, how
2 (indiscernible) daily basis, who make the decision whether a
3 certain leak should be repaired or replaced? Does that even come
4 to you or do those people who make a decision report to you or how
5 does that work?

6 A. No, that would -- unless it's a large area, if it's, you
7 know, a small area that needs replacing or repair say 10 or 15
8 feet, then the people in the field can make that decision. If,
9 you know, if there's a fix a larger area and we have to do a
10 larger project to do it then, it would more than likely come to
11 our attention and then we would look at the history that we have
12 and make the decision after that.

13 Q. You mentioned it was out of ordinary that daily basis
14 you would not be called. How would you define out of ordinary?
15 What is out of ordinary?

16 A. Well, if some of our construction people, you know, when
17 they're digging up and they run into a repair that they see needs
18 replacing and then they would determine that, you know, we need to
19 look at in a bigger scope or a bigger project than just, you know,
20 just repairing a leak.

21 MR. GARDNER: Can I clarify something? When we say
22 construction department, it can be confusing sometimes. I believe
23 Mixon you're referring to those people who make leak repairs.
24 Earlier today you spoke with Bill Roberson, he has construction
25 responsibility. It's different than pipeline construction. The

1 replacement of the pipe could also be called construction, per se,
2 but I believe you are specifically referring to our construction
3 people being those people who maintain our pipeline by repairing
4 leaks.

5 MR. RUSS: Right.

6 MR. GARDNER: That's the construction department at
7 Alagasco.

8 MR. NICHOLSON: So is he referring to Bill Roberson?

9 MR. GARDNER: Yes.

10 MR. RUSS: Yeah, I'm sorry.

11 MR. NICHOLSON: All right.

12 MR. GARDNER: I want to make sure because you can also
13 say construction and pipe replacement --

14 MR. NICHOLSON: Right.

15 MR. RUSS: And the term that we have used, that system
16 integrity area, that's the term I should have been using instead
17 of construction.

18 MR. CHHATRE: So pipe replacement comes out of
19 construction?

20 MR. GARDNER: No, I'm sorry, I did not mean to confuse
21 it, but the construction department at Alagasco is the department
22 who repairs leaks.

23 MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

24 MR. RUSS: Yeah. They don't --

25 MR. GARDNER: They don't construct, I mean --

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: There's a maintenance --

2 MR. GARDNER: And generally, we have contractors.

3 MR. NICHOLSON: So that's what I want to hear, okay. So
4 we'll refer to them as contractors.

5 BY MR. CHHATRE:

6 Q. And you also used the term SAP, S-A-P --

7 A. S-A-P?

8 Q. -- what is that?

9 A. That's our, the software package that we use to keep
10 track of our information as far as the leakage, finances, you
11 know, it's a suite of software package that we keep track of.

12 MR. GARDNER: The link data that I summarized for you,
13 that I showed you earlier today, was derived from the SAP system
14 that we use.

15 BY MR. CHHATRE:

16 Q. Okay. So who populates the SAP system? How the data
17 gets entered into SAP system?

18 A. The maintenance people do it initially. When they go
19 out they'll fill in the information to populate it, you know, as
20 they are repairing leaks and they'll put in the information on
21 that leak.

22 Q. Okay. So who do the information on the computer sheet?
23 By the way I just want to make sure that everything I'm asking you
24 today has to be at the time of the rupture, not since --

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. I just want to make sure. So there's probably something
2 on the computer sheet, then what happens with that information?
3 Where does it go? It goes through your SAP system or somebody
4 else (indiscernible) and decides where it goes?

5 A. No, they'll put it in. They do --

6 Q. If I'm repairing something I put in, I repaired the
7 joint at this location; it goes into your SAP system?

8 A. Um-hum.

9 Q. Okay. And how does that data then from SAP system comes
10 to you to make a decision?

11 A. We have --

12 Q. How is safety (indiscernible) --

13 A. Yeah. We have data analysts or people that work on it
14 and they'll pull reports from the SAP system to do, you know, the
15 analysis for our repair replace decisions.

16 Q. And how do they make that decision before it comes to
17 you for approval or denial? How does that -- how does data
18 analyst people, how do they make the decision, what it's based on?
19 Is it a guideline to follow that so many leaks per feet, those
20 shall replace or (indiscernible) or it costs so much?

21 A. No. What they are doing is just reports that they pull.
22 They'll pull reports for all of our system for the leaks that
23 occurred from the time they pulled the report to 10 years back.
24 And then we'll have our manager of pipeline replacement to look at
25 those and make some decisions based on that and rank them based on

1 the leakage information that he gets.

2 Q. And so this 10-year is a continuous, a rolling
3 continuous 10 years. They go 10 years like 10 years from today
4 and next year comes along and you drop one year and then add that
5 new year into make a continuous 10-year process?

6 A. Yeah. Right now we just go back to, I think it's 2004,
7 and we just continue to --

8 Q. So this 10-year would be from 2005, that's how the
9 process works?

10 A. Um-hum. Now wait a minute --

11 MR. GARDNER: Now let me ask (indiscernible) you're
12 asking for what we were doing at the time of the accident?

13 MR. CHHATRE: Right.

14 MR. GARDNER: If I understand it correctly, my
15 understanding is, Mixon, there was an analysis done around the
16 June timeframe of 2013 --

17 MR. RUSS: '13, right.

18 MR. GARDNER: -- In preparation for the 2014 budget --

19 MR. RUSS: Yeah.

20 MR. GARDNER: You went back 10 years from that?

21 MR. RUSS: Yeah, from that.

22 MR. GARDNER: Oh, you're speaking in that context.

23 MR. RUSS: Yeah, that's accurate.

24 BY MR. CHHATRE:

25 Q. And how does the -- the budget was as the, I guess, the

1 number of leaks the risk factor gets interactive into the
2 decision-making. I'm just trying to understand the decision
3 making process.

4 A. Okay. Well, we look at leak concentration in areas, you
5 know, if it has a high concentration of leakage in an area and we
6 do it on a leak per mile basis. So that's kind of the first
7 criteria that we use just based purely on the number of leaks in a
8 certain area. And then we would -- after that, we would go to our
9 maintenance people, the people in our operating areas and confer
10 with them as to, you know, whether or not they've had problems in
11 certain areas and kind of get -- see if their experience with what
12 they've -- the operating system coincide with what we get from the
13 analysis.

14 Q. And where do the economics comes in the picture? Does
15 economics comes in the picture at all?

16 A. Well, we turn in, you know, we do estimates and we turn
17 in a budget for what we're going to replace that year then it goes
18 to our regular budgeting process. So we will go through and
19 estimate and determine based on, you know, the priorities and how
20 much we could do as far as personnel and resources in different
21 areas and then we'll turn that in and then go through our regular
22 budgeting process after that.

23 Q. So when do you cut off, I guess, if you have -- in your
24 data system you identified two of the locations you need to
25 replace a pipe, each location the length can be different?

1 A. Right.

2 Q. But based on this 200 now, how do you decide which 10,
3 20 or 100 needs to be replaced next year? How is that decision
4 made?

5 A. You mean how we would cut it off?

6 Q. Yes.

7 A. Okay. Well it's, as I said, a lot of times it's going
8 to be based on the resources for different areas. You know, we
9 have seven operating areas and a lot of times it's based on how
10 much work they can do in that area.

11 MR. GARDNER: Can you explain what they do as a
12 permanent pipe replacement locally?

13 MR. RUSS: Yeah. Okay. Our local areas, they're
14 responsible for what we call -- when we decide on a project we
15 have to go in and, you know, take a section of pipe out of service
16 and put the new pipe in. So we have to have, what we call, tie
17 ins. So our system integrity or our maintenance people have to do
18 the tie ins. And they are also responsible for fixing leaks. So
19 we have to work around that volume of work.

20 And then we also have to have meters swapped out. When
21 I say meters that means tie in the new service in from the new
22 main to the old main. So we have to have our customer service
23 people have to do that work. So we have to work that schedule in
24 according to, you know, the resources we have. So that's a
25 limiting factor. And we have a contractor that we use that we

1 spread out across all seven areas.

2 BY MR. CHHATRE:

3 Q. Yes, what is still not clear in my mind is once the
4 report has been generated by your SAP system and you have full
5 number of, I guess, leaking pipes, do you rank them in certain
6 order for the list that they post, the particular --

7 A. Yeah. Again, we rank them initially on just leak
8 concentration in an area.

9 Q. Right.

10 A. And then we would go and talk to our operating personnel
11 in different areas and make sure that what we are seeing from the
12 analysis is what they are experiencing in the field.

13 Q. I would tell you (indiscernible). But isn't your, the
14 initial input is really coming from those people to begin with? I
15 would gather ones who are putting the information in your system,
16 right?

17 A. Right.

18 Q. So once you put your system (indiscernible) and you go
19 back, why would it change?

20 A. Well, I wouldn't say it changed. But see what we're
21 getting out of the system it's just, you know, kind of the leaks
22 and the reason for leaks. And then they may have additional
23 input, say, that the pipe is in an area where it's, you know,
24 maybe getting water in the main or maybe it is in an area where
25 there's, you know, maybe excessive movement. So that's additional

1 information that they may have based on, you know, what the
2 operating conditions are that we would need to take into effect.

3 Q. How does these two factors, I guess, get in wall into
4 ranking pipe number 1 to pipe number 200 --

5 A. Okay.

6 Q. -- in priority. How does that work?

7 A. Well, say for instance if we have a project that we rank
8 say as number 1 and 2 and 3 in an area and then we'll say, well
9 this is the top three we have. And this is, you know, what we're
10 proposing to do this year. And they may say, well number 4 is
11 what's been giving us, you know, problems because of water in the
12 pipe or, you know, people being around it. So we think number 4
13 based on the operating that we see might need to move into and we
14 want to make sure that we do it this year. That's the kind of
15 back and forth that goes when we talk to them.

16 Q. Okay. So -- okay. So here money is not involved in
17 deciding which gets replaced?

18 A. Yes. As I said, what we do is we would look at ranking
19 them and doing estimates and attaching dollar figures to all of
20 those. And then we would submit our budget through the regular
21 budgeting process.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. And then, you know, we would look at, you know, the
24 total amount that we are projected to spend, if we have the
25 resources, you know, in the different areas. And if we can meet

1 all of what the areas are saying that their immediate needs are
2 for that year. If not, we will have to look at rearranging some
3 of the priorities.

4 Q. But are there certain risk, I guess, some risk ranking
5 that you irrespective you have money, you exceed the budget or not
6 exceed the budget. If certain (indiscernible) pose a risk that
7 really is unacceptable that you've got to get it replaced --

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. -- can that be done?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. I guess my question then is, tell me then what is the
12 criteria? Where does it cut off that you can say, well look,
13 irrespective of budget, this (indiscernible) post service trip is
14 going to exceed my budget by 50 percent they would say?

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. What is the cut off criteria for you?

17 A. Well, normally once the budget is approved, we will
18 submit what we think based on the risk rankings and all the other
19 limitations that we have that we can do this amount of work this
20 year. It does come up sometimes where the divisions will through
21 an operating system something will come up and say, well we would
22 need to replace this and either we do one of two things. We
23 either go ahead and replace it and go over what our budget to
24 spend is or we look at moving down some of the less risky projects
25 in that. So, we do make allowances for entry operating through

1 the year.

2 Q. You also mentioned the decision about replacing what you
3 made at the local level, a small section of pipe that doesn't go
4 off to your level?

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. Is the 10 feet kind of a rule of thumb criteria, it's
7 kind of (indiscernible) criteria, do you have somewhat of a
8 procedure for that as to --

9 A. The only criteria we use is if it's over 21 feet then it
10 has to be a capital improvement.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. That's the only criteria we use.

13 Q. So that has to come, go up to you then. I mean, it's
14 coming from your budget.

15 A. Yeah. It would be in the budget, yeah.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Otherwise it's an O&M --

17 MR. RUSS: Otherwise it's an O&M expense.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Less than 21 feet?

19 MR. RUSS: Yeah, less than 21 feet they can replace it
20 with O&M --

21 MR. GARDNER: It's just the accounting.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Regardless of --

23 MR. GARDNER: Yeah, it's just the accounting. It's just
24 an accounting rule to classify the expense as a pipeline -- as a
25 capital --

1 MR. RUSS: O&M, yeah.

2 MR. NICHOLSON: But regardless of (indiscernible).

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And does the -- God, that's been
4 around since I was a child.

5 BY MR. CHHATRE:

6 Q. Besides the number of leaks per mile in the field people
7 giving input, is the pipe diameter -- does the pipe diameter play
8 a role?

9 A. No, not with us yet.

10 Q. Okay. How about the age of the pipe, does that play a
11 role?

12 A. No.

13 Q. Did the population density play a role?

14 A. Yes. We look at that.

15 Q. In which way?

16 A. Well, we look at our leaks per mile and what the
17 consequences are, you know, if it's a concentrated area then we
18 would look at that differently than one with the same leakage per
19 mile. So we would rank the one with the higher concentration as a
20 higher risk.

21 Q. How does that play a role into the first two factors you
22 described to me? When you said population density will play a
23 role, but in which way? What kind of (indiscernible) thermometer
24 do you use?

25 A. Well --

1 Q. I'm still maybe responsive to me, the population density
2 but I don't understand how do you consider it?

3 A. Well, you know, as I said if all things, you know, if
4 the leakage rates are the same on two different places and, you
5 know, we determine that the same as far as no operating risks that
6 we have then we will look at which ones are more of a densely
7 populated area or if it's in a business area, you know, that would
8 have more weight than one that would not be in the area.

9 Q. Okay. Now, the few people who put the information into
10 your SAP system and they put down closure, for example as an
11 issue, third party damage as an issue, how do you differentiate
12 between the two? I mean, third party damage is not going to be
13 resolved by your type of replacement.

14 A. All right.

15 Q. But your system now is going tell you that pipe is
16 damaged. How do you -- I haven't heard so far that, how do you
17 differentiate between what kind of damage or your number of leaks
18 can be third party damage?

19 A. Yes, um-hum.

20 Q. It can be corrosion.

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. How do you resolve that? I mean, so far the only reason
23 I know that you look at number of leaks, 50 in one line versus 10,
24 immediately gets kicked out.

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. The other (indiscernible) as to what's causing those 50
2 leaks.

3 A. Well, once we run a report we would go and look at, you
4 know, look at it more in depth as to the cause and, you know, what
5 factor would play in it other than just strictly number.

6 Q. So usually push back further other than out front?

7 A. Yeah. And this is, you know, the report would give us a
8 leakage per mile and then based on that we go in and look at, you
9 know, what's driving that leaks per mile.

10 One instance is if there is, you know, maybe one leak in a
11 short section of pipe, then that would give us a higher leakage
12 per mile. But there's really no, you know, there's just only one
13 leak. So the risk there we would kind of throw that out and not
14 have it in our analysis. So we do do, you know, it more than just
15 look at the report. We would dive into it and see what's driving
16 those numbers.

17 Q. Taking the same example, maybe stretching it a little
18 further, I can understand not questioning (indiscernible). So if
19 I have one leak in a small section caused by a little, say,
20 graphical of some sort of corrosion.

21 A. Right.

22 Q. And I have 10 leaks, those on Birmingham all caused by
23 people not making the one call in being and damaging my pipe.

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. Now how does -- so by one leak may not even make it to

1 your level because there's only one leak.

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. And how do you -- we can sign that? I mean, you have 10
4 leaks get a high ranking, but it's not really -- replacement
5 program is not going to solve that.

6 A. No, it's not, Yeah.

7 Q. Where that one leak might indicate a very significant
8 danger to the population.

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. How does that get resolved in this system you described
11 to me?

12 A. Well again, the only way we resolve it is to look at it
13 and make a call on which one we think, you know, causes --

14 Q. But they didn't include main lines in the procedure that
15 says distinguish between these two --

16 A. And we do look at, you know, what causes leaks. And you
17 are right, you know, if it's third party damage, you know, but it
18 doesn't enter in on our decision. But we do have to go back and
19 look at the details on that if we come up upon that. And then
20 based on what we find by looking at another level we would make a
21 decision based on which one poses the most risk that we could get
22 rid of by replacing.

23 Q. I'm just asking question -- I'm just trying to reconcile
24 in my mind why the Gate City with the (indiscernible) leaks did
25 not really get pushed way high up compared to the other pipe

1 replacement programs that you guys be considering again.

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. I'm just trying to understand why that did not get
4 kicked in higher and I'm just trying to find out if there's a
5 system in here --

6 A. Okay. Well, and just based on that, if you look at just
7 based on total leaks no matter where it is or what was the cause,
8 then that's where the ranking starts. It's total leaks no matter
9 what the cause is. And then we would look further into that to
10 see if those leaks are, in fact, you know, causing a risk that we
11 can mitigate by replacement.

12 Q. And here's my question, your first (indiscernible) is so
13 clear to me, I mean, it's black of white. If a number of leaks,
14 period, we don't care what causes it, when it comes to not -- we
15 consider the other. See that is negative concept again, there is
16 no guidelines saying how you can see that. I'm awfully confused.
17 So my question is, just like the earlier criteria, the different
18 guidelines that will consider the other causes in this different
19 matter or it's just subjecting reports and looking at the data.

20 A. Yeah. Just a lot of subjectivity goes into looking at
21 the data. But we think that looking at total leaks just in
22 general is more conservative or more risk averted than just
23 pulling leaks out from the beginning, say in the Gate City if we
24 look at all leaks whether they were third party or not, then if we
25 pull out third party damage leaks then that would move it down on

1 our -- it would make it appear that it was less risky. But by
2 looking at all leaks, you know, that is more risky. So the
3 approachment taken by concerning all leaks at the first pass, we
4 feel like it's more conservative.

5 Q. And one last question from me before I give it to
6 somebody else here. One of the comments you made was corrosion
7 (indiscernible) in the system. Is corrosion (indiscernible) in
8 your system is still making process? You made a comment saying
9 corrosion (indiscernible) and corrosion and I believe you have
10 that in the system, it is considered in terms of making a decision
11 making process?

12 A. Yeah. When we -- when they classify a leak as to the
13 cause, they'll look at it and it may have been our maintenance
14 people that are repairing the leak. When they look at it then
15 they'll, we have places where they can put down the cause of the
16 leak and then it will say, you know, corrosion being the cause.
17 And then we will look at those as you say if there are more
18 corrosion leaks, you know, in a certain area then, you know, but
19 that would be kind of on the second path that we would have to dig
20 down into more of the details.

21 Q. In that, in that report that I looked at, was it a crack
22 in the system or does it just say corrosion?

23 A. I'm not sure -- Bob, do you recall?

24 Q. I would rather have you answer it than Bob. And Bob
25 notified me that we had discussed everything. So I would not -- I

1 would never have Bob corrupt up your mind --

2 A. Oh, okay. Bob, don't corrupt my mind.

3 Q. If you do not know, no is fine (indiscernible)
4 understand to be able to cause seeing a crack as an indication?

5 A. Well, I don't look at the each individual tickets, but
6 to my knowledge I've never seen one other than, you know, if it's,
7 you know, if we notice a mechanical failure.

8 Q. How do you define -- what is mechanical failure?

9 A. Well, you know, a break due to earth movement or
10 something like that.

11 Q. Okay. Okay. Thank you so much for educating me.

12 BY MR. JONES:

13 Q. You know you keep -- one of the things you keep talking
14 about, Nixon, is using this and these versus the data you all get.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. How much weight do the SMEs weigh or how much weight do
17 you give to them to make your decisions?

18 A. Well, you know, I probably can't answer that with merit.
19 But I will say based on, you know, the time that we started doing
20 this we have had very little difference in what the numbers say
21 versus what they say has been giving them problems. And usually
22 it's -- we will go to them and say, with a ranking of, you know,
23 say five or six projects that we want to do this year and they
24 will say, well, you know, you've got this ranked third, but it's
25 been our experience that that should be a higher priority. And,

1 you know, obviously if we're going to do those five then we don't
2 have any problem in doing that.

3 So as far as the weight, we really haven't had any
4 disputes as far as something that, you know, we would say, no
5 we're not going to do that, you know. But to date, all of the
6 correspondence, now we may have a little bit of a difference as to
7 where they rank. But as far as the top priority, you know, we've
8 been pretty in line with them, you know, identifying what the
9 entire priorities are.

10 Q. Okay. There's something else that's been mentioned in
11 here today a couple of times is Gate City was ranked 97th or
12 that's what we understand, 97th out of, I don't know, how many
13 projects you all might have had or how many replacements you may
14 have been considering, but that 97 is company wide, correct?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. It's not just the Birmingham area --

17 A. No, it's company --

18 Q. -- it's company wide?

19 A. Right.

20 Q. So out of -- and you all have added like the seven
21 operating areas, correct?

22 A. Um-hum.

23 Q. So out of those seven areas, this one project was like
24 97th down the list?

25 A. Yeah. And we do look at it both ways. We look at it

1 from a company wide, you know, a company wide risk pool and then
2 we look at it as an area specific risk pool. So -- and Gate City
3 was 97th company wide and for Birmingham it moved up a few
4 notches. It just may be, if I remember, I think it was like 88th
5 or somewhere along in there. It was significantly different
6 because Birmingham, you know, it comes most --

7 Q. So much larger and so much --

8 A. Yeah. So from a weighted point of view it did, you
9 know, throw it in a company wide pool versus Birmingham didn't
10 change it very much.

11 Q. Okay. Top 100 leak rankings is the --

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. (Indiscernible) in this?

14 A. Yeah, we looked at that the other day. It would be --

15 MR. NICHOLSON: So, this is the loss I was referring to
16 IR34 link top 100 leak rankings. And you're saying -- so I see
17 that what I saw is ranked number one on this, I noticed the case
18 you mentioned earlier, it's only, the miles report is only .01.
19 There's one league.

20 MR. RUSS: Yeah.

21 MR. NICHOLSON: So it ranked highest, right?

22 MR. RUSS: And those are some of the things that we have
23 To get.

24 . MR. NICHOLSON: So the rankings on this sheet are not
25 the final rankings? It's just your starting point?

1 MR. RUSS: Yeah, right.

2 MR. NICHOLSON: So is there a worksheet that has the
3 final rankings, the final projects that were selected?

4 MR. RUSS: No. What we would do is go through there and
5 say like that first one, you know, if we look at that and delve
6 into the details we would determine that that would have, you
7 know, wouldn't be ranked at all if it's just the one.

8 MR. NICHOLSON: So it comes off the list?

9 MR. RUSS: Yeah.

10 MR. NICHOLSON: Now, Gate City moves up from 97 to 96?

11 MR. RUSS: Yeah.

12 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. Is that captioned anywhere then
13 because it's misleading for us to look at this sheet and go, Gate
14 City is 97th. Where is the final? We don't have one?

15 MR. RUSS: No, we don't have one.

16 MR. NICHOLSON: How would we find out or you must track
17 some of those projects were selected for replacement --

18 MR. RUSS: Yeah.

19 MR. NICHOLSON: -- I guess we would have to match that
20 to this?

21 MR. RUSS: Yeah. We could do that.

22 BY MR. JONES:

23 Q. So is there a list, Mixon, of the projects that were
24 selected?

25 A. Yeah, from the --

1 Q. From this it's just not in the spread, is that what
2 you're saying?

3 A. Yeah. So when we ran this we just did the extract of
4 the leaks and ranked them at that time. But we could go back and
5 look at what projects that, you know, that we struck out of that.

6 MR. NICHOLSON: So there's no formal process of
7 documents why some of these were excluded and others included?

8 MR. RUSS: I don't think so. It might be that we would
9 keep track of it, but I'm not sure.

10 MR. NICHOLSON: It's not an SAP?

11 MR. RUSS: No, uh-uh.

12 MR. NICHOLSON: The other thing I noticed on this list,
13 so there's only 100, is it -- you just --

14 MR. RUSS: We just listed the top 100.

15 MR. NICHOLSON: But there's more?

16 MR. RUSS: Yeah.

17 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. So everyone gets a rank, every
18 project?

19 MR. RUSS: Yeah, right, the whole --

20 MR. NICHOLSON: System.

21 MR. RUSS: Um-hum.

22 MR. NICHOLSON: Because I noticed in the top 100 and you
23 said this is for all your divisions, 91 of the top 100, I think,
24 on here are Birmingham?

25 MR. RUSS: Yeah.

1 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. And is that just because
2 Birmingham is your largest?

3 MR. RUSS: Right. It contains about 75 percent of all
4 of our --

5 MR. NICHOLSON: Oh, okay, okay, so it's not surprising
6 then.

7 MR. GARDNER: Then you got a Birmingham rank worksheet
8 also inside the --

9 MR. NICHOLSON: Oh, okay. I saw that. I didn't know if
10 I created that or if that was original, okay.

11 MR. JONES: Go back to your statewide, is Montgomery in
12 there anywhere, specifically my office building?

13 MR. RUSS: Are you doing a search, Bob?

14 MR. JONES: They don't even got us ranked at all. All
15 right, I'm just going to keep praying real hard everyday.

16 MR. RUSS: But we do -- we do perform replacements in --

17 MR. JONES: Oh, I know.

18 MR. RUSS: -- in every area.

19 MR. JONES: I know. You all have done something in
20 Montgomery here recently.

21 MR. NICHOLSON: Go ahead, Wallace, I cut you off.

22 MR. JONES: No, that's okay, I was through with mine.

23 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. Then I'll continue along the same
24 thought here, Nixon.

25 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

1 Q. Then if there's no other documentation beyond this, I
2 guess I didn't hear what procedure or what -- where is the written
3 documentation that defines the cast iron replacement program? Is
4 there something that documents this whole procedure?

5 A. You mean document the ranking?

6 Q. Decision makings, yes, yeah process for ranking.

7 A. Yeah. Well, this would document our process for ranking
8 them. And then, as I said, what we would do is go through this
9 and see if, let's say like the first one there we would not have
10 it in the ranking. We would take that project out.

11 Q. And we is you --

12 A. And Jerry, Jerry, our manager at pipeline replacement.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Jerry Johnson.

15 Q. The two of you?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Well, I thought I heard subject matter experts similar.

18 A. No, just the ones that we feel like that we know, you
19 know --

20 Q. Oh, okay. You do the first round?

21 A. Right, yes, correct. And then we would, you know, list
22 those. After that then we would have our, you know, priority that
23 we would go to and talk to our --

24 Q. How big is that? What do you get it down to top 15, top
25 20 or is it by work location?

1 A. No. We try to; again, you know based on the level of
2 resources we have to try to do projects in every area.

3 Q. Right.

4 A. Most of the projects we're doing in Birmingham and I've
5 had to get this for sure but I think last year we ended up doing
6 35 or 40 different projects, but I'll have to get that number. I
7 don't have it right off hand. But somewhere in that neighborhood
8 of total projects that we did company wide.

9 Q. Okay. So you take those 35 projects after you and Jerry
10 have gone through them and you take them to subject matter
11 experts?

12 A. Yes.

13 MR. GARDNER: Excuse me. Did you mean to say or did you
14 say in the final decision we selected 35 projects or we called it
15 to 35 --

16 MR. RUSS: No. Last year --

17 MR. GARDNER: From this list.

18 MR. RUSS: -- last year we installed -- we had funds
19 appropriated to do 35 projects. That was in our budget.

20 MR. GARDNER: Yeah. I wanted to make sure you --

21 MR. RUSS: Yeah, I --

22 MR. GARDNER: The review process versus once a decision
23 is made. I believe you were talking about --

24 MR. RUSS: Yeah, that's what we did.

25 MR. GARDNER: -- once the decision we had 35 individual

1 capital projects. There may have been more than that that you
2 (indiscernible) through the operation.

3 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

4 Q. So this list pretty much stays in tact, you just crossed
5 out the ones you can cross out?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. And then you take it to subject matter experts, is that
8 right?

9 A. Right, for different areas.

10 Q. So the subject matter experts are division people out in
11 the field?

12 A. Right, right.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Our maintenance people, the supervisors and people who
15 repair leaks and put eyes on leaks that we did go up and, you
16 know, have to maintain the system over the people that we get
17 subject matter input from.

18 Q. But these divisions are pretty small, it's, you know, .3
19 miles. They're going to know -- you give them the coordinates,
20 they know where the sections are?

21 A. Yeah, we'll print out a map and kind of go over it with
22 them. Now, when you say those divisions are small --

23 Q. Well, I see .13, .01, .3.

24 A. What are you looking at?

25 Q. C.

1 A. Yeah, but there's several, there's several quarter
2 sections in an area. So this is just the quarter section that
3 showed up as far as the concentration of it. This doesn't cover
4 all of the area of like Selma; they have more than two --

5 Q. Okay. So when you have the discussion with the subject
6 matter experts, you're talking about the full quarter, is that
7 right?

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. Not just these little portions?

10 A. Well, we're talking about the whole system.

11 Q. So it's an even larger discussion?

12 A. Right.

13 Q. And they can point the pipe, that doesn't even show up
14 on, here?

15 A. Yeah. And as I told Wallace that to date, you know, we
16 haven't had any large variance, you know, hadn't had anything that
17 then would point to an area where when on our radar screen we
18 hadn't already ranked it.

19 Q. Okay. So who is the subject matter expert in the Gate
20 City area, who would that have been?

21 A. We went and talked to, myself and Jerry, he's the one
22 that goes and talks to them, it would have been the managers, the
23 system integrity managers and superintendents.

24 Q. What are their names? I'm looking for names here.

25 A. One of them would have been Henry Buchanan (ph.), he's

1 in our Metro operations. It's under our field people.

2 Q. Okay. And who else, you mentioned three.

3 A. For Birmingham it would have been primarily Henry
4 Buchanan and then they may have called in some other people who,
5 some of the other supervisors or superintendents and I'm not sure
6 who they would have called in on the meetings.

7 Q. And again there's no documentation about what was
8 discussed or what -- there's no minutes from this meeting or
9 anything?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Okay. What's the name of that report? You mentioned
12 the SAP report that's printed out for repair replace decisions,
13 what's the name -- what would I call that report?

14 A. I don't know. It's --

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. It's one that they general record, I'm not sure what
17 they -- if it's got a formal name or not.

18 MR. GARDNER: Is it just the download of the leak report
19 from SAP to put into an Excel spreadsheet?

20 MR. RUSS: Yeah.

21 MR. NICHOLSON: Oh, okay, so it's basically what we're
22 looking at now? Yeah, C, right, okay, I thought it was --

23 MR. GARDNER: I mean, with more info -- well, it
24 wouldn't have, for clarity; it's not the same as this one. The
25 map numbers are not embedded. This comes from a, does it not,

1 from a derivation from our mapping system as well. The leak
2 address comes from SAP, the leak cause, the leak repair date,
3 et cetera. I mean, it's matched into our mapping system to get
4 this, like that map we included as part of this, I believe, it's
5 the information request 34.

6 MR. RUSS: Yeah. It would come out of SAP as dots, dots
7 on the map.

8 MR. GARDNER: Oh, okay, does that make sense? The map
9 numbers are not in SAP.

10 MR. NICHOLSON: Right. So you end up with a map and a
11 table, the SAP --

12 MR. RUSS: Yeah. Well, they produce a table based on
13 where the dots fall in the map.

14 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

15 Q. So do you ever, if you look at these, you talk to your
16 subject matter experts, is it always a repair and replace decision
17 or does your group ever take mitigative measures such as
18 decreasing pressures or increase leak surveys? You know, if you
19 can't get to a project right away, it's outside; don't have the
20 capital, that it's not critical. Are there other measures you
21 employ or is it just --

22 A. No, we haven't to this point --

23 Q. Okay. And this list here, does it just go away and then
24 a new list is generated next year, is that right?

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. Okay. So if it's a really bad (indiscernible) it should
2 reappear?

3 A. Yeah. That number one will probably appear next time
4 also.

5 Q. Because you go back 10 years on leaks, is that what that
6 is?

7 A. Um-hum.

8 Q. Those leaks?

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. So it had one leak in 10 years?

11 A. Yeah, unless we have another one, you know, where we
12 pull it again.

13 Q. Yeah, that was another one?

14 A. Right.

15 Q. Okay. So on Gate City it's at 75, that's 75 leaks over
16 10 years, is that right?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Okay. I didn't know, I wasn't sure.

19 A. Yeah, this is cumulative over the past 10 years.

20 Q. So have you pulled -- have you reranked this since
21 January? I guess it doesn't matter you replaced the --

22 A. No, yeah. Yeah, that was the one we did in January.

23 Q. Are all the -- everything on your survey did a 3-year
24 interval, are the intervals the same?

25 A. No, not for --

1 MR. GARDNER: Well, I don't know. Your question --

2 MR. NICHOLSON: On this list here, are the intervals of
3 leak surveys the same?

4 MR. GARDNER: Yes. They're --

5 MR. RUSS: Yeah, all this is on a 3 year unless it falls
6 within a business district where we would do it yearly.

7 MR. JONES: There's something with Birmingham Metro
8 (indiscernible) doing business.

9 MR. RUSS: Right, yeah.

10 MR. NICHOLSON: Wouldn't you find more leaks if you were
11 doing it annually? No, not necessarily?

12 MR. GARDNER: I don't know.

13 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

14 Q. And you also mentioned population concentrations
15 factored into this assessment?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. But again, it's not reflected on this sheet or anywhere
18 else?

19 A. No.

20 Q. So how is it -- how do you take it into account? Do you
21 have a map?

22 A. Yeah, you know, we look at our survey boundaries when we
23 do our surveys --

24 Q. Leak surveys?

25 A. Yeah, leak surveys, for our business district, you know,

1 we'll look at that and overlay that on the survey area and look at
2 what dots or what leaks are in those particular areas.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. And if it shows a, what we call, a, you know, a hot spot
5 or higher concentration then we'll move that up on the priority
6 list based on, you know, being in a more densely populated
7 critical area.

8 Q. Okay. And when seeing and the submission from Bob
9 recently that there was a CEI consultant study done in like 1985,
10 is that -- how did that impact anything you do? Is there a
11 procedure to make decisions based on some of that information
12 still?

13 A. No. When we took, started, you know, with the new
14 process and started, you know, developing it we didn't look at
15 that prior to that.

16 Q. When was the new process put in place?

17 A. The new organization, which when we started looking at
18 it company wide, we started in 2011.

19 Q. Because prior to that it had been done at the division
20 level?

21 A. Right.

22 MR. GARDNER: It was late 2011, early '12.

23 MR. RUSS: Yeah.

24 MR. NICHOLSON: And, in fact, I kind of remember from
25 after the CEI study didn't you implement, I thought I saw letters

1 at the division to start looking out there. So that's when the
2 division program started maybe, kind of, maybe mid, late 80's and
3 it just progressed?

4 MR. GARDNER: It was -- the program was more or less
5 done on a division basis with some guidance from the corporate
6 office as indicated in all that information.

7 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

8 MR. GARDNER: I would say that's accurate what you said.

9 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

10 Q. You're over the corrosion group as well; do they ever
11 weigh in when a distribution line is exposed? I think Ravi kind
12 of touched on this earlier. Did they ever go out and look at
13 these and determine whether it's graphitic corrosion, general
14 versus local?

15 A. Yeah, to my knowledge they don't.

16 Q. Do they have any input in the risk ranking sheets?

17 A. No.

18 Q. So has the accident in Gate City, has it prompted any
19 changes within your group or how risk ranking is performed or --

20 A. Well, not on the analysis of our risk ranking. We have,
21 we are looking at and implementing some different things as far as
22 maybe an increased survey for housing authorities.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. So we are looking at some of the things, some of the
25 public awareness programs, so we are looking at as far as, you

1 know, what we do to identify the survey and keep more abreast
2 about it. But not in how we rank.

3 Q. Like per request?

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. Okay. And it looks like, if I looked historically I
6 think it's 40 miles a year roughly that you guys are replacing --

7 A. Yeah, a little over that.

8 Q. A little over that?

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. So is it just strictly your VP comes down and says, you
11 get 40 miles this year to replace, go find 40 miles. Is that --
12 is it always 40 miles or is it -- does it come bottom up? You
13 tell Ken or your VP?

14 A. I wish it would come more bottom up, but it's more, you
15 know, more of a collaborative process.

16 Q. So it doesn't have to be 40?

17 A. No.

18 Q. It just happens to be 40 because that's a workable
19 number?

20 A. Well, that's just the, that's just the average. I mean,
21 I think last year we retired 56 miles. Yeah, last year we retired
22 56.

23 Q. The last year being 2013?

24 A. 2013.

25 Q. Twenty of which was Gate City, right?

1 MR. GARDNER: No.

2 MR. RUSS: No.

3 MR. GARDNER: No, that's not reflected.

4 MR. RUSS: Yeah, and it wasn't 20 miles.

5 MR. GARDNER: It was more like 5 miles. It was 20,000
6 feet.

7 MR. NICHOLSON: Twenty thousand feet.

8 MR. RUSS: In 2012, it was 30, roughly 39 miles; in
9 2011, 40; 2010, 47.

10 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

11 Q. Okay. So it's really up to your group to define how
12 much needs to be replaced and then it becomes a budget negotiation
13 after that?

14 A. Yeah. And again we have other restricting factors as
15 far as, you know, the work level in the different areas.

16 Q. Okay. There's other replacement programs going on too,
17 right?

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. You don't just do cast iron?

20 A. Right.

21 Q. What's the other one you're working on?

22 A. Oh, we look at bare steel.

23 Q. Bare steel.

24 A. We're beginning to look at some of the vintage pipe
25 also.

1 Q. Are those a bigger threat than your cast iron or equal
2 or --

3 A. Right now, you know, we couldn't say, I couldn't say.

4 Q. Cast iron makes up significant more --

5 A. Right, a vile replacement, yeah.

6 Q. And then Ravi asked you earlier if your small diameter
7 pipe took precedence on replacement and I believe you said no?

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. But now the CEI study, I think, puts an emphasis on the
10 small diameter pipe for replacement?

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. Why would you abandon that thinking?

13 A. Well, I wouldn't say we abandoned it. This area, you
14 know, because of our frost line we're not subject to the breaking
15 as much as, you know, maybe some further up north. It would
16 mainly be due to our weather that we haven't experienced where
17 small diameter gives us --

18 Q. That's the risk with the small diameter is the ground
19 movement from (indiscernible) is that what --

20 A. Yes. That's, I mean, this had been our experience that,
21 you know, and whether when it goes up and down that the small
22 diameter cracks more but we don't experience that as much because
23 of where we are in the country.

24 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. What is the frost line here,
25 don't know, you guys you don't --

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

2 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. I think that's all I have. Do
3 you have some follow up for him?

4 MR. CHHATRE: Yeah, I got a couple of follow up
5 questions, if you don't mind?

6 MR. RUSS: Okay.

7 BY MR. CHHATRE:

8 Q. One thing, it's still (indiscernible) in my own mind
9 this moving number, moving average over 10 years that you are
10 doing?

11 A. Yeah. Well, and we haven't determined whether or not,
12 you know, we're going to be moving that average 10 years. We went
13 back 10 years, as I said, we just started this analysis process.
14 We started looking at it in 2012 and 2013 was the first year that
15 we ran it and it was based on 10 years. So next year, you know,
16 we probably will do it on 11 years. We just hadn't decided
17 whether we're going to make it a 10-year moving average or --

18 Q. So I guess it looks like 10 was just a good number.
19 There's no statistical basis for picking that, you know, normally
20 pick 10 or --

21 A. Well, that's when we're most comfortable with our --
22 that's when we're most comfortable with the data that's in SAP.

23 MR. GARDNER: It just about coincides with the -- 2003
24 is when we started using the SAP system. And so we've got --

25 MR. RUSS: So going back to 2004.

1 MR. GARDNER: -- 10 and 11 years worth of data in this
2 SAP system.

3 BY MR. CHHATRE:

4 Q. When, I'm not sure if they completed it or not, but let
5 us say with your moving average, your ranking, if I held, and let
6 us take Gate City, not necessarily that's what happened, but prior
7 to the rupture let us say I had six leaks in Gate City. I detect
8 one, like one or two each, and then, you know, the rupture I had
9 eight. Would you take an average, I still might get buried, the
10 train might get buried without drawing anyone's attention because
11 my average 10 year number will show I have no problem with Gate
12 City. How do you know you don't see that other problem?

13 A. Well, we haven't addressed that to this point.

14 Q. Do you see where I'm coming from?

15 A. Yeah, I see, um-hum.

16 Q. And I think both ways, some pipelines have similar
17 repairs done and then they will not have any more leaks for a
18 while --

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. -- I mean, that would make it massed.

21 A. Yeah. I agree with you.

22 MR. CHHATRE: A question for Matt I guess, are we going
23 to talk about the public awareness today or we're going to come
24 back later?

25 MR. NICHOLSON: I have it scheduled for tomorrow, I

1 almost got into that. But just given the time --

2 MR. CHHATRE: I said recommend doing it tomorrow but if
3 not --

4 MR. NICHOLSON: I think I'd like to stay on the subject
5 here if we have more questions.

6 MR. CHHATRE: Okay, yeah. Okay.

7 MR. NICHOLSON: Is that okay with everybody, I'll put it
8 out to the group?

9 MR. GARDNER: Absolutely.

10 MR. RUSS: It's fine with me.

11 MR. NICHOLSON: You're okay talking again tomorrow?

12 MR. CHHATRE: Yeah, depending on what your schedule is.

13 MR. GARDNER: He's on the list; both of us are on the
14 list, public awareness.

15 MR. RUSS: Is that tomorrow or Wednesday?

16 MR. GARDNER: Half a day on Wednesday.

17 MR. CHHATRE: Or I got half a day was really loudly
18 spoken.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It depends on how you put that.

20 MR. JONES: Well, at least you won't have me to bother
21 you. I'll be out of here.

22 BY MR. CHHATRE:

23 Q. You mentioned that when (indiscernible) brought back the
24 subject matter experts, I guess, to answer mass question you said
25 the people were managers and supervisors who provided their input

1 on that. But they are not really the subject matter expert, per
2 se. I mean, subject matter experts are the people who trained us.

3 A. Yeah, no --

4 Q. So the impression I'm getting is they are not to be
5 heard directly. Their voices filtered through their supervisor.

6 A. Well, because our supervisors are field supervisors, so
7 a lot of them would be only seen when some of these repairs are
8 made probably. And we do ask that they talk to, you know, before
9 we go around we ask them that they talk to these people who are in
10 the field.

11 Q. I understand. My concern is still your process of
12 principle, underlying principle, is to talk to subject matter
13 experts --

14 A. Right.

15 Q. -- that will give you the impression when you first send
16 that. Once you prepare this initial list and you knock down some
17 small items.

18 A. Yeah. Well --

19 Q. -- the subject matter experts had a direct input and the
20 way you're discussing process now is whether the supervisor is
21 there or not, they are not considered subject matter experts.

22 A. I think we --

23 Q. I'm just (indiscernible) perfectly fine.

24 A. We, I, feel like those supervisors are subject matter
25 experts.

1 Q. If you don't identify them as subject matter experts in
2 your list, that's why obviously they are not.

3 A. Oh, okay.

4 Q. See what I'm saying --

5 MR. GARDNER: I'm not sure I understand what you're
6 saying.

7 BY MR. CHHATRE:

8 Q. I may have misunderstood. But what I understood process
9 was the list is prepared and then the management decides this one
10 league and one minor segment is not really true so you knock down
11 those. Then the list goes back to subject matter experts to --

12 A. Yeah, to refine.

13 Q. -- refine, if you will, I mean lack of a better word.

14 A. Okay.

15 Q. But then the process described was, I say mass question
16 was, the managers, the supervisors look at the list and provide
17 input.

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. So a little -- initially, (indiscernible) given was your
20 subject matter experts are really the people who know the system
21 are the people who work in the trenches, an example was I see more
22 problems with number 4 ranking. But these supervisors, you know,
23 managers are not really the -- unless they --

24 MR. GARDNER: I think he's telling they are.

25 BY MR. CHHATRE:

1 Q. But identifying the list, then they are not. I think
2 your list of, your subject matter experts that was from earlier,
3 you identified people as subject matter experts. There are a list
4 of people who are considered --

5 MR. GARDNER: With the (indiscernible) program, for
6 example --

7 BY MR. CHHATRE:

8 Q. The way I understood the subject matter experts are the
9 people who are in the trenches identified by somebody as years of
10 experience and know what the criteria was. And the years of
11 experience may not necessarily make it a supervisory position.

12 A. Okay. And that's what I'm saying, that when we go and
13 talk to the people in the division, we are classifying them and we
14 are confident that they are experienced enough to know what's
15 going on in their area. So my definition of the subject matter
16 experts would be those supervisors and managers that we talk to.
17 And in addition to that, we ask them to, you know, get with the
18 people that are in the ditches making it just to make sure that
19 there's nothing that they missed because they don't be at every
20 job. So I do classify those as subject matter experts now.

21 Q. But there's no list in the company that says for
22 corrosion these 10 people are subject matter experts for third
23 party damage or whatever other criteria you are using. So using
24 subject matter experts is a term kind of loosely used, whether
25 they're management officials or subject matter experts are the

1 subject matter experts, so there is no criterion for that, okay.

2 I guess that's pretty much, that's all for me.

3 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

4 Q. But just to reiterate, I think Mixon in your history
5 you've worked in that position before. Haven't you held a
6 supervisory position at the division level?

7 A. No. Well, when I went to the division I went as a
8 division manager.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. So I didn't hold the supervisor role of superintendent.

11 Q. But you had experience at division level, so you --

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. And would you --

14 A. I've had experience with those people.

15 Q. Yeah, you would have considered them to be subject
16 matter experts --

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. -- working in that capacity?

19 A. Oh yeah, yeah. And a lot of them came from the trenches
20 to be supervisors. So it's, in fact, I would say the majority of
21 them came from the trenches and got promoted to supervisory level.

22 MR. JONES: Like Will this morning, he started out as,
23 you know, an improvement and worked up to, you know, his position.

24 MR. CHHATRE: He was going on 6 years. So he had not
25 work completed for 6 years.

1 MR. GARDNER: And he worked in the trenches for 23 prior
2 to that.

3 MR. CHHATRE: True.

4 MR. NICHOLSON: Yeah, he had 30 years.

5 MR. RUSS: Yeah.

6 MR. GARDNER: So it depends on --

7 MR. RUSS: So he has more, what you would say, trench
8 experience or --

9 MR. CHHATRE: He would not release any knowledge of the
10 system. I thought the whole concept was to fill in the gap as to
11 an example he gave was very good, that look this number 4 we are
12 having more problem recently, right, and then he moved out. Now,
13 supervisors may have worked on the system 20 years ago, but
14 (indiscernible) that was a would not know what is happening in the
15 most recent trend.

16 MR. GARDNER: We may have to agree to disagree. Well,
17 the action becomes, you know, how do you quantify how much
18 information a supervisor has about what's going on in the field?
19 And I think what we're saying is, the supervisor in the field has
20 responsibility for those crews and their responsibility is to
21 understand what's going on with those crews and they pass that
22 information along. They know it. They talked to the supervisors
23 and --

24 MR. CHHATRE: Point well taken.

25 MR. GARDNER: -- and whether we, you know, we again, we

1 may differ on that.

2 MR. NICHOLSON: Well, do we want to bring a supervisor
3 in and let Ravi --

4 MR. RUSS: Well, you had one this morning.

5 MR. NICHOLSON: Yeah, that's true.

6 MR. CHHATRE: No, I thought we didn't know this process.

7 MR. RUSS: Oh, yeah.

8 MR. NICHOLSON: We were following up on a question --

9 MR. CHHATRE: All I'm saying is the only thing that I'm
10 thinking is, there is no list identifying the experts. That list
11 can change over the year for that matter.

12 MR. RUSS: I understand what you're saying.

13 MR. NICHOLSON: All right, I'm done. Let's see, do you
14 have anything else Wallace?

15 MR. JONES: No, nothing else from me.

16 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

17 Q. Just to -- I'm going to recap a couple things. You said
18 early on some of your responsibilities, Mixon, tracking of
19 repairs, I thought I heard you say, what is that? How do you
20 track repairs, is that your responsibility?

21 A. Yeah. Just through knowing the process when we go
22 through our leak analysis as far as putting them on the maps and
23 seeing where they are, you know, the GIA coding as far as all of
24 that. And from, you know, making sure that, you know, leaks are
25 repaired, you know, we have our same people looking at, you know,

1 when that leak is due for repair.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Yeah, that sort of thing.

4 Q. So if it's a grade 2 leak you have that responsibility?
5 You track that grade 2 leak for that, whatever, 12-month window
6 I'm sure it is?

7 A. Yeah, right, and then we would communicate to our
8 operations people, you know, you have these many leaks are coming
9 due and things of that nature.

10 Q. Is that also through SAP or is that through --

11 A. Yeah, yeah, through SAP.

12 Q. And then I guess that was it. That's all I have.

13 A. Okay.

14 MR. NICHOLSON: Appreciate it, thanks Mixon.

15 MR. RUSS: All right, thank you.

16 MR. NICHOLSON: Talk to you again later. We'll go off
17 the record now.

18 (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 RELEASE WITH IGNITION
 BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA
 DECEMBER 17, 2013
 Interview of Mixon Russ

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-14-MP-001

PLACE: Birmingham, Alabama

DATE: July 14, 2014

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.

Michelle Smiroldo
Transcriber