

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 AND BOB GARDNER

Alagasco Headquarters
Birmingham, Alabama

Wednesday,
July 16, 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
Office of Railroad, Pipeline and Hazardous
Material Investigations
National Transportation Safety Board

NANCY McATEE, Fire and Explosion Specialist
National Transportation Safety Board

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

KEITH BLACKWOOD, Pipeline Safety Investigator
Alabama Public Service Commission

REID CARPENTER, Esq.
(Representative on behalf of Messrs. Russ and Gardner)

I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. NICHOLSON: Good morning. Today is Wednesday,
3 July 16, 2014. My name is Matthew Nicholson; I'm an investigator
4 with the National Transportation Safety Board in Washington, D.C.
5 We are at the Alagasco Headquarters in Birmingham, Alabama. This
6 interview is being conducted as part of the investigation into the
7 natural gas distribution release and ignition that occurred in
8 Gate City, Birmingham, Alabama on December 17, 2013. This is case
9 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 the interview. That is the person of your
16 choosing. Please state for the record who you have selected.

17 MR. RUSS: Reid Carpenter.

18 MR. NICHOLSON: And Mr. Gardner, you're also permitted
19 to have one other person in the room. Please state for the record
20 whom you have selected?

21 MR. GARDNER: Reid Carpenter.

22 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. We will now go around the room
23 and have each person state their name with spelling, title and
24 organization that you are representing. I will start and proceed
25 to my left.

26 My name is Matthew Nicholson, spelled M-a-t-t-h-e-w,

1 N-i-c-h-o-l-s-o-n. I am an investigator with the NTSB.

2 MR. CHHATRE: Ravi Chhatre, R-a-v-i, C-h-h-a-t-r-e. I'm
3 accident investigator with Pipeline Division, NTSB.

4 MR. CARPENTER: Reid Carpenter, R-e-i-d,
5 C-a-r-p-e-n-t-e-r, here for Bob Gardner and Mixon Russ.

6 MR. RUSS: I'm Mixon Russ, Mixon, M-i-x-o-n, Russ,
7 R-u-s-s. I'm Director of Pipeline Risk Management for Alabama
8 Gas.

9 MR. BLACKWOOD: Keith Blackwood, K-e-i-t-h,
10 B-l-a-c-k-w-o-o-d, Pipeline Safety Investigator, Alabama Public
11 Service Commission.

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

14 INTERVIEW OF RUSS MIXON AND BOB GARDNER

15 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. This is an interview to discuss
16 the Alagasco Public Awareness Program, and I thought maybe for
17 this discussion we would just refer to the Alagasco submission to
18 the NTSB entitled or titled, Statement of Factual Information, and
19 beginning on about page 8 you have outlined your public awareness
20 program. I thought maybe if you, just Bob or Mixon, whoever would
21 like to start, just give us an overview of the program and maybe
22 we can talk through this document. Can you identify yourself too
23 as you speak for the transcript.

24 MR. GARDNER: Yeah. This is Bob Gardner. Just in
25 general, our public awareness program currently resides in Mixon

1 Russ's organization, Pipeline Risk Management. Barry Bowman (ph.)
2 the manager of risk assessment and damage prevention was unable to
3 be with us today, So Mixon and I are going to share the
4 information about our program.

5 Prior to the company reorganization in late 2011, I had
6 had responsibilities for the public awareness program for a few
7 years and so I have some background in that regard. I'm also
8 involved in it today with respect to my role in regulatory
9 compliance in working with the Public Service Commission to ensure
10 our program meets their expectations as well. So with that --

11 MR. NICHOLSON: Just to be clear -- this is Matt -- the
12 program you're going to cover today is what was in place in
13 December of 2013?

14 MR. GARDNER: Yes. There is some additional information
15 that's been a follow-up, but in general that's what I'm going to
16 discuss from the content of this document.

17 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

18 MR. GARDNER: So public awareness is a formal part of
19 192 that came about several years ago. There's always been public
20 education provisions in the code. What the public awareness
21 regulation did has formalize these particularly around the
22 American Petroleum Institute recommended practice 1162, companies
23 were required to develop a formal public awareness program around
24 that.

25 And so we take an approach that I'm going to explain

1 here that is essentially around our, centered around our different
2 audiences, so to speak, our customers, our non-customers,
3 emergency officials, public officials and first responders, for
4 example.

5 And so first I'm going to talk about the -- looking at
6 page 8 on the document, how we educate the public about natural
7 gas safety. As noted in the document, we have a copy of our
8 customer bill. It contains the emergency contact number and the
9 website address. The website contains additional safety
10 information. Each customer bill contains that.

11 MR. NICHOLSON: So this would be the, this is Matt, this
12 is the brochure that would have gone out to the tenants of Marks
13 Village?

14 MR. GARDNER: No. This is the monthly bill for gas
15 usage that contains -- this is an introduction, per se, to note
16 that on a monthly basis the opportunity for information about
17 education about natural gas safety is noted in our monthly
18 customer bill.

19 MR. NICHOLSON: But they, I mean, it still holds true is
20 Marks Village tenants were customers?

21 MR. GARDNER: Yes, that's correct.

22 MR. NICHOLSON: So they would have received this in
23 their billing?

24 MR. GARDNER: That is correct, that is correct. The
25 document you referenced just a moment ago is mentioned again on

1 page 9, that twice a year we mail our customers a copy of the
2 natural gas safety tips brochure, that is noted in Exhibit H of
3 the statement of factual information document. Included in that,
4 this is a bill insert that is mailed in the April and October
5 bills.

6 MR. NICHOLSON: You're looking at --

7 MR. GARDNER: Exhibit H. It is three pages. And it's
8 got information noted about natural gas safety, what to do if you
9 smell natural gas, some information about pipelines, appliances,
10 safety, et cetera. It also includes information about calling
11 before you excavate. And in general outlines our, how they can
12 contact Alagasco 24 hours a day and our 1-800 number.

13 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. So I see a section here, if you
14 smell gas.

15 MR. GARDNER: Yes.

16 MR. NICHOLSON: Right, second page of the exhibit.
17 There you're telling the customer to open windows and doors,
18 extinguish all open flames, do not switch -- call Alagasco. So
19 they're encouraged to call you?

20 MR. GARDNER: That is correct.

21 MR. NICHOLSON: That's for a faint odor. Are they ever
22 encouraged to call the fire department? Let's see, strong odor
23 also calls you, okay. So they're not --

24 MR. GARDNER: Well if you have a smell of strong odor of
25 natural gas it says, leave your home immediately and call

1 Alagasco's emergency phone number from a neighbor's home.

2 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. All right. So no guidance that
3 they should call the fire department?

4 MR. GARDNER: No. Our guidance is we want them to call
5 us first.

6 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. And when they call you who are
7 they getting, who are they calling, a dispatch center?

8 MR. GARDNER: They're reaching our 1-800 number, our
9 contact center, the 24-hour --

10 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

11 MR. GARDNER: It's noted in the brochure as well on the
12 first page, flip it over. It's in there below the picture.

13 MR. NICHOLSON: Oh, I see, okay.

14 MR. GARDNER: So this is the safety brochure that was
15 sent out --

16 MR. NICHOLSON: Where is this? When I call 1-800 where
17 is that location, where is that manned? It's here in Alabama or
18 in Birmingham?

19 MR. RUSS: Yes.

20 MR. GARDNER: Yes. It's located in our midtown business
21 office in downtown Birmingham.

22 MR. NICHOLSON: Is that where Rochelle --

23 MR. GARDNER: Yes.

24 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

25 MR. CHHATRE: This is Ravi. Bob, the big city, each

1 unit is individual, each residence. Does this go to the
2 customers, do they see this brochure or it goes to the housing
3 authority?

4 MR. GARDNER: My understanding is the bills, because the
5 units were individually measured, then the bills go to, went to,
6 the individual customers based on their unique meter and,
7 therefore, the bill inserts were included to the individual
8 customers in that unit as there would be for any other, any other
9 metered customer.

10 MR. CHHATRE: I don't want to harp on it, but you say
11 your understanding. Are you sure it happens or do you want to
12 check that and get back to us?

13 MR. GARDNER: I'm sure it happens. They have individual
14 accounts -- in that community, they have individual accounts with
15 us.

16 MR. CHHATRE: So they would have seen this?

17 MR. GARDNER: They would have sent -- they would have
18 received this information if they were an Alagasco customer, it
19 would have been included in their bill.

20 MR. NICHOLSON: That's a request I was going to make,
21 actually, is that we -- when you keep a database of mailings,
22 right, of who these go to --

23 MR. GARDNER: Well, they go to all of our customers.

24 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

25 MR. GARDNER: In April and October.

1 MR. NICHOLSON: So can we see -- can you submit to us an
2 outbook from that database that says these were mailed to the
3 tenants of Marks Village in 2013? You track that, right, when
4 they go out, who they go to?

5 MR. GARDNER: Well, as a matter of our procedure they go
6 in the bill automatically to every --

7 MR. NICHOLSON: Oh, that's the billing.

8 MR. GARDNER: It's the bill insert --

9 MR. NICHOLSON: But this goes out twice a year,
10 Exhibit H?

11 MR. GARDNER: It goes in the bill. So in the April bill
12 and the October bill this brochure is inserted in that bill for
13 everyone who is sent a bill.

14 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

15 MR. GARDNER: So that is our procedure, our practice and
16 so if they received a bill in April and October this was inserted
17 in the bill wherever they are located.

18 MR. NICHOLSON: Well, I guess we want confirmation that
19 those people are in your database and accounted for.

20 MR. RUSS: Yeah, we --

21 MR. GARDNER: Yeah, we can give you that.

22 MR. RUSS: We can give you that. And if you look at --
23 this is Mixon Russ. If you look at page 16 on that document, it
24 gives you kind of a summary of the brochures that were mailed out
25 in each year.

1 MR. GARDNER: Can we bring it up on the screen?

2 MR. RUSS: Um-hum.

3 MR. NICHOLSON: Yeah, I saw the totals. Is that what
4 you're referring to?

5 MR. RUSS: Yes.

6 MR. GARDNER: Yeah, so the answer is, yes, we know and
7 can provide the documentation that backs up the number, for
8 example, that more than 780 safety brochures were mailed to
9 customers in 2011.

10 MR. NICHOLSON: Yeah. I don't need all 780; I'm most
11 concerned with the people of Marks Village.

12 MR. GARDNER: No, we're saying the same thing.

13 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. Oh, the 780 are in Marks Village?

14 MR. RUSS: Yeah, all of these are Marks Village.

15 MR. NICHOLSON: How do you have -- I thought they only
16 500 units, how do you get 780 or is it 500 --

17 MR. GARDNER: We do it twice a year.

18 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

19 MR. GARDNER: So we would have mailed out -- and the
20 number of customers can vary --

21 MR. RUSS: Vary, yeah.

22 MR. GARDNER: -- at different times of the year.
23 They're not constant the whole year. Sometimes customers are on,
24 sometimes they're off.

25 MR. NICHOLSON: Got you, okay.

1 MR. GARDNER: But, you know --

2 MR. RUSS: But we can supply more detail on that.

3 MR. GARDNER: Do you want it for 2013?

4 MR. NICHOLSON: Yes.

5 MR. GARDNER: I'm going to talk about this later as
6 well, but we also have documentation about the non-customers in
7 Gate City that received our non-customer mail out. Okay, so on
8 page 9, back to page 9 of the document, there is information
9 about, really a summary of Exhibit H that we just talked about at
10 the top of the page, there's also information about the same
11 brochure and how that is distributed to our customers when our
12 service technicians go into a customer's home.

13 There's information about that and we have a process
14 described in there such that our Birmingham Metro operations
15 location has been leaving this brochure behind when they enter a
16 residence and interact with a customer and we've asked for
17 additional information where we've recently expanded that beyond
18 Metro into other areas of Birmingham. We'll also be updating our
19 service mechanics procedure manual to note that change.

20 MR. NICHOLSON: When would a service technician enter a
21 customer's premises?

22 MR. GARDNER: They would enter to answer, if they have a
23 question about a potential leak call in the house, appliances not
24 working, change in the meter to --

25 MR. RUSS: Change in the meter, yeah.

1 MR. GARDNER: -- relight the gas appliances.

2 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

3 MR. GARDNER: We have a number of scenarios, but this
4 would be our customer service employees that essential support our
5 service beyond the meter. And they would also --

6 MR. NICHOLSON: And where is that brochure, I'm sorry?

7 MR. GARDNER: It's the same brochure.

8 MR. RUSS: It's the same brochure.

9 MR. GARDNER: Same brochure. So not only did we mail
10 that out twice a year, but we periodically provide it to customers
11 and their provider --

12 MR. RUSS: On service calls.

13 MR. GARDNER: -- on service calls as well.

14 MR. NICHOLSON: I thought I'd heard one interview that
15 there was a brochure that was handed out also on entry that talked
16 about the dangers of leaving an oven open or am I incorrect?

17 MR. RUSS: It would be this brochure.

18 MR. GARDNER: Well, the only brochure we have, that we
19 give our customers, is the same one that we mail out twice a year.

20 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

21 MR. GARDNER: It addresses appliance safety. I can't
22 speak to it but it addresses --

23 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

24 MR. GARDNER: -- but it talks about natural gas usage in
25 general.

1 MR. BLACKWOOD: That would probably be the housing
2 authority because what we see in other places the housing
3 authority gives brochures and when they do inspections about how
4 to clean appliances, what to leave on, what not to leave on. So
5 that was probably what you were referring to.

6 MR. NICHOLSON: You think it was BHA, okay.

7 MR. RUSS: And this is Mixon, and the -- our Metro
8 operations would be where we work Gate City out of, out of our
9 Metro operations.

10 MR. GARDNER: So looking at the bottom of page 9, we are
11 now alluding to discussion about our non-customers briefly. I
12 know a component of our public awareness program, it's embedded in
13 RP 1162 is that the requirement to educate non-customers about
14 information about the pipeline. And we have a partnership with a
15 company that works with us to -- looks at our customer
16 information, our service area and looks at non-customers within a
17 boundary around our pipeline or other facilities and they are
18 mailed a brochure that is similar to the customer brochure, but
19 it's different in some content because I was -- the first one
20 addresses customers. This is more geared to non-customers. It's
21 in Exhibit I of the documents.

22 MR. NICHOLSON: How does this company determine who is
23 going to get it?

24 MR. GARDNER: We provide them -- I'm sorry.

25 MR. NICHOLSON: You can just explain it, how do you

1 determine?

2 MR. GARDNER: We provide them with a listing of our
3 customers by address and we provide them a map, electronic copy of
4 our facilities with a buffer around it, and they match, they have
5 a national database of addresses of people, businesses, et cetera,
6 they match that against our company addresses and in that buffer
7 and any addresses that land in that buffer that are not our
8 customers get on our list.

9 MR. NICHOLSON: So what's the buffer? It sounds like a
10 PIR calculation. How do you determine that buffer?

11 MR. GARDNER: Let me look. I know -- let me look and
12 tell you exactly what -- it's a certain distance, I think it's
13 within a couple hundred feet of our pipeline, but I can give you
14 that exact number.

15 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

16 MR. GARDNER: I don't think I have it documented here.

17 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. Yeah, it would be nice to know.

18 MR. GARDNER: But it is a --

19 MR. NICHOLSON: And that's a requirement that Alagasco
20 has implemented. It's not a regulatory over 1162?

21 MR. GARDNER: An 1162 requires communications with your
22 non-customers on an annual basis. This is the method we've chosen
23 to do that.

24 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

25 MR. GARDNER: And so Exhibit I is the non-customer

1 brochure. The information is similar, has our 1-800 emergency
2 number. It talks about what natural gas is, what you should not
3 do if a leak occurs, how to be safe from that situation, other
4 information about pipeline organizations, et cetera.

5 And then at the end of that brochure is an opportunity
6 for them to provide some information back to us. The company that
7 manages the mail out and the receipt of these -- this information
8 is a company, Paradigm; they're out of Kansas.

9 MR. NICHOLSON: Pentagon --

10 MR. GARDNER: Paradigm, P-a-r-a-d-i-g-m, and they --

11 MR. NICHOLSON: Who writes the checks for this brochure?
12 Is this Alagasco or --

13 MR. GARDNER: It's a brochure that Paradigm produces and
14 we approve the content. We review the content for accuracy and
15 for completeness. So before we mail it out we approve the
16 brochure.

17 MR. CHHATRE: These non-customers, are they lighted gas
18 by somebody else or they have no gas?

19 MR. GARDNER: It could be either one. If they live in
20 proximity to our facilities they may be an all-electric customer,
21 they may be served by another gas company or they may not have gas
22 at all. But they are -- their home or business is in proximity to
23 a natural gas pipeline and that intent is there.

24 The big picture bucket is they are a non-customer. We
25 don't know if they're a customer of another gas company nearby or

1 propane or oil and electric. We just know that their address is
2 in the buffer and they're non-customers.

3 MR. CHHATRE: So these non-customers in the buffer
4 include the service lines or just the transmission lines or both?

5 MR. GARDNER: It buffers the -- it does not buffer the
6 service lines. It buffers the distribution and transmission
7 facilities.

8 MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

9 MR. GARDNER: All of our pipeline -- all of our
10 transmission are distribution mains. The buffer is done around
11 that.

12 MR. NICHOLSON: So they could be customers of another --

13 MR. GARDNER: They could, but that's not really common.
14 We have some overlapping territories, but --

15 MR. CHHATRE: That's the reason I asked you the
16 question.

17 MR. GARDNER: We don't qualify that, we just -- if their
18 address lands in the buffer and they're a non-customer then they
19 get a brochure.

20 MR. BLACKWOOD: This is Keith. RP 1162 requires them to
21 do it within 660 feet of the pipeline. They may extend that area
22 out, that's why Bob said he would have to verify --

23 MR. GARDNER: Some of it is -- yeah, we have different
24 parameters --

25 MR. BLACKWOOD: But the industry standards for

1 distribution is 660 feet. So it's not a good chance that there
2 would be another customer of another gas. It would be you've got
3 a house in the neighborhood, they've got service, the back street
4 doesn't and they fall on that 660 feet that they will get a non-
5 customer. That's generally how it works.

6 Now, if a transmission and other things their areas may
7 be larger or smaller, that's basically depending on Alagasco.

8 MR. GARDNER: We'll still get inside information.

9 MR. NICHOLSON: That's good to know in my head at this
10 moment.

11 MR. GARDNER: So another aspect of our public awareness
12 program relates to a partnership that we have with Alabama 811. A
13 number of gas companies in Alabama with the initiation of the
14 public awareness regulations partnered with Alabama 811 to create
15 what's known on page 10 as the Alabama Public Awareness
16 Cooperative Training. This is a series of meetings that are
17 conducted each year. The state of Alabama has been divided into
18 19 geographic zones.

19 Alagasco has facilities in 11 of those 19 geographic
20 zones and we participate in the funding of these meetings that are
21 potentially or particularly, I should say, targeted to emergency
22 responders, public officials and expeditors. There is a
23 presentation that is provided by a representative from Alabama 811
24 about pipeline safety. We had an opportunity to provide input of
25 the content. We did initially and will continue to review that.

1 A presentation is provided if an emergency responder or
2 public official or excavator is unable to attend the meeting.
3 They are provided, initially I believe, they were provided a
4 notebook, now they're provided a DVD of that information. There
5 is a pre and post survey done in the meeting. And the idea is to
6 -- for the gas companies in a given geographic area to share
7 information with these entities and help them better understand
8 natural gas safety.

9 We have found this to be a very productive program for
10 us and in particular the continuity of the information and the
11 consistency of the information throughout the state, same person
12 makes the presentation in all 19 zones, it's very scripted
13 intentionally and the information has been shared. In addition to
14 that, this arm of Alabama 811 manages the information that they
15 receive in terms of the feedback and response and they make
16 adjustments to the program based on the feedback they receive.

17 So this is, in essence, the three legs of public
18 awareness from 1162; residential program we addressed that with
19 the pipeline safety insert twice a year and our notations on our
20 customer bill. The non-customer is annually addressed through the
21 mail out working with Paradigm and the emergency responders,
22 public officials and excavators is managed and addressed through
23 our partnership with the Alabama 811 and the Alabama Public
24 Awareness Cooperative Training.

25 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay, the APACT -- so APACT organizes

1 and delivers the content?

2 MR. GARDNER: Yes. But the content is reviewed and
3 approved by the natural gas companies and pipeline companies
4 participating.

5 MR. NICHOLSON: And APACT, because it's also
6 Alabama 811.

7 MR. GARDNER: APACT is a separate part, separately
8 funded part of Alabama 811.

9 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

10 MR. GARDNER: It is funded by the participants.
11 Essentially the participants, for example, we're in 11 of the 19
12 meetings. A part of that program is renting a facility, providing
13 meal to these, an evening meal, to the individuals that attend and
14 each company that participates in the program funds a pro rata
15 share of the costs of those meetings.

16 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

17 MR. GARDNER: So we already fund Alabama 811 from our
18 damage prevention call before you dig. This initiative is funded
19 separately based on the participants. So Alagasco funds its
20 portion of 11 of the 19 zones.

21 MR. NICHOLSON: Yeah, that's fine. Who is doing the
22 emergency responder's education, that's what I'm wondering? It
23 wouldn't be Alabama 811; they're talking about excavation damage.

24 MR. GARDNER: No, they're not -- they're talking,
25 they're not talking about excavation damage. But they're talking

1 about pipeline safety in general. We have a comprehensive
2 pipeline safety presentation --

3 MR. NICHOLSON: So part of their message is catered
4 directly to emergency responders?

5 MR. GARDNER: It is directly catered to emergency
6 responders, public officials and excavators.

7 MR. NICHOLSON: What does it tell them? Is it just
8 about the hazards of the gas or how to detect it or what to do
9 when they get on the scene?

10 MR. GARDNER: It talks about, I mean, it talks about the
11 general pipeline safety, how pipelines are marked, what to expect
12 when you have a natural gas leak, who to contact, things of that
13 nature.

14 MR. NICHOLSON: Do they record -- do the attendees sign
15 into these?

16 MR. GARDNER: Yes.

17 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. We have records of whether the
18 Birmingham Fire Department was part of these?

19 MR. GARDNER: I would have to verify that they were,
20 that they were invited.

21 MR. NICHOLSON: And who are public officials? Would
22 that be --

23 MR. GARDNER: Elected officials.

24 MR. NICHOLSON: The mayor?

25 MR. GARDNER: Could be.

1 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

2 MR. GARDNER: Mayor, commission, council.

3 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

4 MR. GARDNER: So APACT or Alabama 811 working with us
5 manages the attending list, they send out the invitations, they
6 coordinate the meetings. We participate with our attendants, with
7 funding and with commentary on the content on a regular basis.

8 MR. NICHOLSON: Do you ever go back to see who is
9 attending these things? How many first responders are actually --

10 MR. GARDNER: We have data from all the meetings.
11 Alabama 811 publishes a summary of the meetings. It indicates the
12 number of attendees, the comments received. Basically they do a
13 survey of a compilation of that. That's part of our public
14 awareness plan is to collect that information on an annual basis
15 in April, Alabama 811 --

16 MR. NICHOLSON: Collect it, but do you do anything with
17 it?

18 MR. GARDNER: Well, we review it, yes.

19 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

20 MR. GARDNER: And we adjust, we work with Alabama 811 to
21 adjust the content as needed and ---

22 MR. NICHOLSON: What about engaging the people that
23 aren't showing up? Are you getting good engagement from the first
24 responders in Birmingham, Birmingham Metro?

25 MR. GARDNER: I can't speak directly without looking at

1 the information that we're getting engagement necessarily. But
2 we're getting -- you know, they are certainly getting invited and
3 they're getting the information. I would have to look back on the
4 other information to see exactly --

5 MR. CHHATRE: Where are these meetings are held at?

6 MR. GARDNER: Pardon me?

7 MR. CHHATRE: Where these meetings are held?

8 MR. GARDNER: Well, it varies year to year but again the
9 state is divided into 19 zones, so typically they're held at a
10 public facility or a hotel where there's enough space to
11 accommodate people.

12 MR. CHHATRE: My question is, fixed location in each
13 zone or (indiscernible) from zone to zone each year?

14 MR. GARDNER: Well, there's a meeting in each zone. For
15 example, we're in 11 of the 19 zones so we have representation in
16 11 different places across the state, across our territory and it
17 may be at a different location one year and the next year it moves
18 to a different facility. But the intent is to put it in a
19 location such that it will accommodate and be as convenient as
20 possible for the people, but again it does vary.

21 I know, I think the ones for this area are typically
22 held north of town or have been held north of town in either
23 Gardendale or Fultondale, I can't recall which one, but they're
24 adjacent communities.

25 MR. CHHATRE: In the past, I noticed that a lot of small

1 towns that have one or three fire departments, for example, and
2 I'm just curious nobody's getting (indiscernible) with 3400
3 (indiscernible), so my question really is, how do you
4 (indiscernible) in other words, this 3,400 number represents 80
5 percent of the first responders are they or whatever
6 (indiscernible) respond, or is it 3 percent, only 5 percent.

7 MR. GARDNER: Right. I don't know the answer to your
8 question but I can get that because we may have records of how
9 many attended and then they also have records of how many were
10 sent the information as well.

11 MR. CHHATRE: And I guess the next question would be
12 that the people who don't attend, do you mail those brochures to
13 them even though they did not attend?

14 MR. GARDNER: Yes. If they did not attend, they will
15 still receive the information from Alabama 811.

16 MR. CHHATRE: The information still gets to them?

17 MR. GARDNER: Pardon me?

18 MR. CHHATRE: The information still gets to them?

19 MR. GARDNER: Yes. The content that was presented in
20 the meeting, the presentation, is provided to the non-attendees
21 and that is documented through the process that Alabama 811 has.

22 MR. CHHATRE: What do you have a performance matrix for
23 this activity? How do you compare it year to year? You are
24 improving or you're --

25 MR. GARDNER: We have a formal evaluation that the code

1 requires up to 4 years. We take a high-level look at it every
2 year when we compare the APACT program with non-customer and the
3 customer and we do some, I think I referenced it later, we did in
4 this paper about the -- actually, that's noted on page 15. We
5 talk about how we know that our program is working and it makes
6 some reference to those surveys.

7 So again we look at the total program and we look at the
8 information on a yearly basis. And on every 4 years we do a
9 formal evaluation that includes phone surveys of customers and
10 non-customers.

11 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. So since we're on this, on page
12 15, 97 it says, this is done by Quest?

13 MR. GARDNER: Quest Fore.

14 MR. NICHOLSON: And what do they do? Can you just tell
15 us how you arrive at this 97.95?

16 MR. GARDNER: The conduct a phone survey and there's a
17 series of questions they're asked such as, do you know the number
18 to call if you smell natural gas.

19 MR. NICHOLSON: And they say -- they have to repeat the
20 number or they just say yes?

21 MR. GARDNER: They are yes or no questions.

22 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

23 MR. GARDNER: And so we did a study in 2010 with them
24 using Quest Fore and --

25 MR. NICHOLSON: What was the sample size of it, I mean,

1 that seems like pretty good results there. What area --

2 MR. GARDNER: I'd have to go back and look at the exact
3 numbers.

4 MR. NICHOLSON: Is this Gate City? Does this include
5 Gate City?

6 MR. RUSS: No. This would be --

7 MR. NICHOLSON: All of Alabama.

8 MR. GARDNER: It would be -- there's not -- a specific
9 area or community is not targeted. It's basically a sample, a
10 statistical sample, of our customer base that makes so many calls
11 and gets so many responses that compile the results.

12 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. So this is --

13 MR. GARDNER: I don't have the details.

14 MR. NICHOLSON: But it's broken down somewhere?

15 MR. GARDNER: Yes.

16 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

17 MR. GARDNER: Yes.

18 MR. NICHOLSON: It seems like a really high number,
19 that's good.

20 MR. GARDNER: So that was in 2010. In 2014, the survey
21 showed that, looking at page 16, that from their survey 96.5
22 percent of the people who reported it, they reported they had to
23 put information back as safety. Like I said, there's a series of
24 questions they're asked and these are just two --

25 MR. NICHOLSON: You just give one number out of this

1 Quest Fore because I noticed this one says, for seven people who
2 reported knowing how to recognize a leak and what to do if they
3 smell gas.

4 MR. GARDNER: Now we get -- there's a series of 10 to 15
5 questions, I don't remember the exact number, but they're asked
6 questions that relate to natural gas safety in general. And then
7 we have results that are compiled from each.

8 MR. NICHOLSON: But you've reported two different --

9 MR. GARDNER: We have.

10 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

11 MR. GARDNER: We have.

12 MR. NICHOLSON: So there will be, in 2014 there will be
13 an entry for percent of people who reported knowing how to
14 recognize a leak?

15 MR. GARDNER: Yes. I believe there will be.

16 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. Yeah, I'd be curious to compare
17 that.

18 MR. GARDNER: So the bottom line is, we're required to
19 monitor the effectiveness of our program. What we've done is
20 working annually with the 811 as well as look at this every 4
21 years on a total program basis. More informally, we've got
22 information for the document --

23 MR. NICHOLSON: Just to reiterate, this is the whole
24 state that you're looking at? You don't break it down into
25 communities, I mean --

1 MR. GARDNER: No.

2 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. Or regions? Aren't there some
3 (indiscernible) that are harder to reach than others, rural versus
4 city? Your program doesn't target its message to -- okay. It
5 seems like no.

6 MR. GARDNER: I mean, we treat our customers equally.
7 They all receive a brochure.

8 MR. NICHOLSON: Right.

9 MR. GARDNER: They all receive a brochure if they're in
10 a boundary or a non-customer. An emergency official in one part
11 of the state is treated the same as an emergency official in
12 another part of the state. So in terms of that, I mean, we target
13 them equally and we survey in a statistical manner such that we
14 feel like we give you information from that.

15 Okay. So in addition to that, our public awareness
16 program resulted on a regular basis from the Public Service
17 Commission and to date we have received favorable audits in that
18 world.

19 MR. NICHOLSON: What's a favorable audit? Keith, I
20 guess you write --

21 MR. BLACKMAN: This is Keith. We have a federal
22 checklist, I'm not exactly sure what the number of the form is
23 right now because I don't have it in front of me, but it goes
24 through, I think, it's 13 pages of questions and it asks, kind of,
25 it's got a section on the basic plan. Does it have everything

1 that RP 1162 requires? It goes into a section about effectiveness
2 survey, if they did it what they were supposed to on an
3 effectiveness survey.

4 Let's see, we got a section in there on other language.
5 It's got different questions about if you provide the messages in
6 other languages, I mean, there's several questions in there. We
7 go through there. There's a satisfactory, unsatisfactory, not
8 checked, just like your typical federal form and that was done
9 sometime last year. All public awareness inspections had to be
10 done by the end of the year last year. I did not form the one on
11 Alagasco, so I can't speak to anything about that.

12 MR. NICHOLSON: So they get a copy of that sheet when
13 you're done?

14 MR. BLACKWOOD: No. They do not get a copy of any of
15 our completed inspection forms. They are given a list of
16 things --

17 MR. NICHOLSON: So what is favorable? How do you
18 determine it was favorable? Well, no comment is -- I mean, they
19 didn't have any findings, is that what you're saying?

20 MR. GARDNER: I'm not saying they didn't have findings.
21 I mean, we were audited and we were not cited --

22 MR. BLACKWOOD: There's a difference between findings
23 and citing.

24 MR. NICHOLSON: Oh, okay.

25 MR. GARDNER: That's my --

1 MR. BLACKWOOD: If we find a major violation, we'll send
2 a letter stating that the program did not meet section whatever of
3 RP 1162, you have X number of days to correct it. And so what
4 he's saying is they did not receive a violation. Now, there could
5 have been some issues there that said, you didn't have this person
6 right here no longer works here, updates your plan or whatever.
7 We wouldn't write a letter for something that small.

8 MR. NICHOLSON: Right, okay.

9 MR. BLACKWOOD: But if it's a blatantly --

10 MR. NICHOLSON: Do you say your plan is favorable or --

11 MR. BLACKWOOD: I can't speak to that because I do not
12 know who did the inspection or how that went.

13 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

14 MR. BLACKWOOD: That's what he's -- if he would have
15 said there were no violations, that's what he's saying --

16 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. You cleared that up. They don't
17 actually say --

18 MR. RUSS: More, I guess, our interpretation of not
19 getting --

20 MR. NICHOLSON: Yeah, okay, that's all right.

21 MR. GARDNER: Could do satisfactory is what --

22 MR. BLACKWOOD: Usually we do an exit interview with
23 anybody we sit down with and we go over if there's any issues, we
24 go over that. If there's a violation we go with what the
25 violation is --

1 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

2 MR. BLACKWOOD: -- what they need to do to correct it
3 and tell them that there will be a letter on the way in writing to
4 confirm what we just told them.

5 MR. NICHOLSON: And that was 2013, it was prior to the
6 accident?

7 MR. BLACKWOOD: It could have been done either 2012 or
8 2013. There was a 2-year window there where our department said
9 that we were going to do public awareness and I can't speak to
10 when it was actually done.

11 MR. GARDNER: I think it was 2013.

12 MR. BLACKWOOD: But it would have been done that 2-year
13 period.

14 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

15 MR. BLACKWOOD: Now I do have one question, this is
16 Keith, on the effectiveness survey. That 96.5 percent of people
17 reported that they believe they have adequate education on gas
18 safety. Is that 96.5 percent of your total group surveyed or is
19 that 96.5 percent of the people who reported back because I know
20 there's a difference there. In that Quest Fore survey, there's a
21 percentage of people that you reached and a percentage of people
22 that didn't answer. That's 96.5 percent of the people that
23 answered, correct?

24 MR. GARDNER: Absolutely.

25 MR. BLACKWOOD: Okay. I just want to make sure I was

1 clear on that.

2 MR. GARDNER: We can only draw conclusions about those
3 who have responded to the survey.

4 MR. BLACKWOOD: Okay. I just wanted to make sure that
5 that 96.5 percent wasn't the total number that responded. There's
6 a different number there and I wanted to make sure I was clear.

7 MR. GARDNER: Yeah. In fact, the way we intended that
8 is when it says, percent of people who reported --

9 MR. BLACKWOOD: Okay.

10 MR. GARDNER: -- the application would be those who
11 replied or answered the phone and answered the questions, that
12 percent is the percent of those people.

13 MR. BLACKWOOD: Okay. I just wanted to make sure, I was
14 confused, I'm sorry.

15 MR. NICHOLSON: These are conducted by phone. These
16 aren't written mail in surveys?

17 MR. GARDNER: No, they're conducted by phone, that's
18 right.

19 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. and you got these studies, right,
20 so we can request those?

21 MR. GARDNER: Um-hum.

22 MR. NICHOLSON: And it will break them down. So what do
23 you do with these numbers? Are you going to go after that 3½
24 percent and alter your plan based on these findings?

25 MR. GARDNER: We could. What we do is we take the total

1 picture of all the -- again, the final survey is just one
2 component. The information we obtained from our APACT meetings is
3 another component. So we look at that as a total package and we
4 make decisions about what to do with that information to improve
5 our program.

6 MR. CHHATRE: Obviously, you cannot make people to
7 respond to you.

8 MR. GARDNER: That's right.

9 MR. NICHOLSON: Or answer the telephone for that matter.

10 MR. GARDNER: But we do know that this company, Quest
11 Fore, has engaged contractually with other gas companies to
12 perform similar surveys. So it is a company that does this for
13 other companies or has in the past.

14 MR. CHHATRE: Now do you let the gas companies, do you
15 compare these results amongst yourselves or they are confidential
16 (indiscernible)?

17 MR. GARDNER: Up till now we have not compared those
18 results.

19 MR. CHHATRE: Usually you're in meetings and things like
20 that.

21 MR. GARDNER: I do know that through our walk with
22 American Gas Association from time to time topics like this come
23 up in the best practices arena. We do participate in that. I
24 can't speak to the fact. I don't believe that public awareness
25 results specifically have been the topic. They've been more about

1 manage prevention. So it's a topic of interest to the industry,
2 but not something we specifically have done that I recall.

3 Okay. I think I skipped a few things here; I want to go
4 back to if that's okay?

5 MR. NICHOLSON: Um-hum.

6 MR. GARDNER: We also have education about Alagasco,
7 particularly the pipeline safety on our website, this is noted on
8 page 10.

9 MR. NICHOLSON: And this is a screen shot of the website
10 as it would have appeared on December 17th. This isn't a very --
11 this isn't current.

12 MR. GARDNER: I think that is a current snapshot close
13 to the time of publication of the --

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The document --

15 MR. GARDNER: Yeah, I do know last year we went through
16 an evaluation of our website and I was involved in a group effort
17 to update the content of the website, particularly my area was the
18 safety and education areas and we have an opportunity to
19 periodically review that content and we went to a brand new
20 website designed in 2013.

21 MR. NICHOLSON: So do we have something that reflects
22 what it would have appeared on December of 2013?

23 MR. GARDNER: Not in that document, but I think we can
24 get that. It's going to be very similar.

25 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. Well, it would be nice to have

1 something a little more relevant.

2 MR. BLACKWOOD: This is Keith. Bob, on your Internet
3 stuff that you're putting on your website, are you considering
4 this supplemental material as an inspection form would ask this is
5 not technically required by code. This is additional information
6 you're putting out there for people to see?

7 MR. GARDNER: Yeah, I think we would.

8 MR. BLACKWOOD: So this would be considered supplemental
9 material, correct?

10 MR. GARDNER: I think so. I'm not sure how we exactly
11 documented that in the current plan, but again it's intended to be
12 additional pipeline safety information to address the website
13 users.

14 MR. BLACKWOOD: Thank you.

15 MR. GARDNER: And you'll notice on this next right would
16 be the 1-800 number is in the upper right portion of the screen in
17 red, safety and education tab specifically talks about what to do
18 if you smell natural gas. It also references our safety brochure;
19 the customer bill insert that we just referenced is included there
20 as well.

21 The next couple pages are just excerpts from Facebook,
22 Twitter, YouTube. We have people that maintain our social content
23 in that regard and those are other examples. We also have a blog
24 that's noted on page 14.

25 You'll notice on page 15 that we, in 2012 we began a

1 partnership with Energy Underground that provides the education
2 materials to schools. We provide materials to teachers to help
3 students understand about natural gas safety. In 2013, we
4 distributed more than 30,000 of these books to schools in our
5 service area and it included what's listed here below, the natural
6 gas safety activity book.

7 MR. NICHOLSON: What's the YouTube? I missed that, page
8 13? Is that for kids? Is that recent? That looks recent too.
9 Was that in effect in December of 2013?

10 MR. GARDNER: I believe it was, but I would have to
11 confirm that.

12 MR. NICHOLSON: But that's -- your audience there is
13 children, that's safety tips for kids.

14 MR. GARDNER: And that's just an example of one of the
15 times.

16 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

17 MR. GARDNER: I think the last portion of our document
18 that relates to public awareness is on page 16 regarding; I made
19 some reference to this. We have a high level summary of the
20 number of safety brochures that were mailed to customers in the
21 Marks Village community in 2011, 2012 and 2013 as well as non-
22 customers in 2013.

23 We've also noted that December 16, 2010 and December 16,
24 2013, Alagasco service mechanics made more than 500 service calls
25 in a 2-block area surrounding the accident. And as mentioned

1 earlier, Matt I think you asked this question, Quest would have
2 included an opportunity to turn on gas service, relight pilot
3 lights or respond to emergency calls.

4 MR. NICHOLSON: I'm sorry, say that again. We're on
5 page --

6 MR. GARDNER: The bottom of 16. It would be middle to
7 bottom of 16.

8 MR. NICHOLSON: Oh, okay, more than 500 service calls.
9 Service mechanics made more than 500 service calls in the 2-block
10 areas surrounding the accident, which is outlined on this page 17?

11 MR. RUSS: Yes.

12 MR. GARDNER: Yes.

13 MR. NICHOLSON: That's a lot of calls for service
14 mechanics.

15 MR. GARDNER: It's 3 years --

16 MR. NICHOLSON: Oh, those calls included --

17 MR. GARDNER: Yes, they included --

18 MR. NICHOLSON: Oh, I see that's 3 years.

19 MR. GARDNER: Turn on gas service, relight pilot lights
20 and respond to emergency calls.

21 MR. NICHOLSON: And we have all those. Okay, resubmit
22 all that to us.

23 MR. GARDNER: Um-hum. So the diagram on page 17 --

24 MR. NICHOLSON: I'm sorry, we're going to -- let's take
25 a break. We're going to go off record for a little bit.

1 (Off the record.)

2 (On the record.)

3 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. We're back on the record. Part 2
4 of the Alagasco Public Awareness Program. We've been joined in
5 the room by Ms. McAtee. Nancy, if you'd introduce yourself for
6 the record please.

7 MS. McATEE: I'm Nancy McAtee with the NTSB.

8 MR. NICHOLSON: Can you spell that?

9 MS. McATEE: M-c-A-t-e-e.

10 MR. NICHOLSON: Thank you. Okay. Where did we leave
11 off? We were talking about the service calls to --

12 MR. GARDNER: Yeah, we were talking about the
13 information noted on the bottom of page 16 that indicates that
14 between December 16, 2010 and December 16, 2013, the Alagasco
15 service mechanics made more than 500 calls in the 2-block area
16 surrounding the incident. Those requests would have included
17 items such as turning on gas service, relighting a pilot light or
18 responding to an emergency call.

19 On page 17 we have depicted this same information on a
20 map of the community. The green color in the map, each unit
21 number is colored as noted. The green notes customer bill insert
22 twice a year. The yellow denotes the customer bill insert twice a
23 year and the safety brochure also provided of safety service call
24 visit. And then the blue denotes the unit was vacant the entire
25 period.

1 So this is a map that graphically depicts the
2 information noted at the bottom of page 16.

3 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. So where there's a service call
4 visit denoted on the pictorial, we don't know if it was one, two,
5 three, four visits. It's just at least a visit within that 3-year
6 period?

7 MR. GARDNER: Right. And that -- the yellow again shows
8 that plus --

9 MR. NICHOLSON: Yeah.

10 MR. GARDNER: -- the bill insert.

11 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

12 MR. GARDNER: So in yellow -- green denotes the customer
13 got the bill or was sent the safety insert. Yellow, both safety
14 insert and visit.

15 MR. NICHOLSON: So at the accident location, Unit 80,
16 they had no service calls. They received only the biannual safety
17 bill insert?

18 MR. GARDNER: Yes. That's what the information depicts,
19 correct. So based on that information and really in summary, you
20 know, what we've sought to do in this portion of our document was
21 to really provide information about the public awareness program
22 in general and specifically to address the Gate City Marks Village
23 area as well for the 3 years preceding the accident.

24 MR. NICHOLSON: Is there anything else to go -- oh,
25 that's it. That's page 17?

1 MR. GARDNER: Yes.

2 MR. NICHOLSON: Plus the two exhibits. Okay. So I'd
3 like to see when -- I'd like to make a request for the Quest
4 surveys or the reports that they issued to you from the Quest Fore
5 surveys.

6 MR. GARDNER: Okay.

7 MR. NICHOLSON: In 2010 -- it was done in 2010 and 2014,
8 those were the most recent? Yeah, that's what it says. Yeah, so
9 if we could get copies of those that would be great. And I did
10 have a question regarding when we have an incident like Gate City
11 where there is a, you know, Birmingham Housing Authority that acts
12 as sort of the landlord or the agent of the community, is there
13 any special interface? Is there anything more you do to interface
14 with Birmingham Housing Authority to educate them?

15 MR. GARDNER: We've done some additional things since
16 the accident, but none to my knowledge prior to.

17 MR. NICHOLSON: Prior to. What have you done since the
18 accident?

19 MR. GARDNER: I'm going to ask Mixon to comment on that.

20 MR. RUSS: Yeah, this is Mixon Russ. Since the accident
21 we've sent letters to the residents and to the housing authority
22 and kind of reemphasizing the fact that if they have or smell gas
23 to call Alabama Gas directly. And we sent that to not only Gate
24 City but to all of the housing authorities in our service
25 territory.

1 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. So you applied it to other places
2 with similar --

3 MR. RUSS: Yes, under similar circumstances or housing
4 authority in other areas.

5 MR. BLACKWOOD: Is that just in this division or is that
6 the one --

7 MR. RUSS: No, that's -- it's company wide, yes.

8 MR. BLACKWOOD: Okay, thanks.

9 MR. NICHOLSON: And do you guys do any drills with
10 emergency responders, fire departments or anything on an annual or
11 semi-annual basis?

12 MR. GARDNER: You mean mock drill or something?

13 MR. NICHOLSON: Yeah, a mock drill or even a
14 (indiscernible)?

15 MR. RUSS: No, we don't do drills. We have them, the
16 fire departments in for just kind of a training on what our
17 emergency procedures are just to keep an established relationship.
18 And we do that within each of our operating divisions we'll
19 contact the fire department.

20 MR. NICHOLSON: How often is that held?

21 MR. RUSS: That's once a year.

22 MR. NICHOLSON: Once a year. So did the Birmingham Fire
23 Department attend? Is this a -- do you go out to them or do you
24 invite them in?

25 MR. RUSS: Yeah, we go out to --

1 MR. NICHOLSON: Oh, okay, to them.

2 MR. RUSS: Yeah.

3 MR. NICHOLSON: So you'll have a record of when you last
4 visited --

5 MR. RUSS: Yes.

6 MR. NICHOLSON: -- Birmingham Fire Department, okay.
7 We'd like that too.

8 MR. RUSS: Okay.

9 MR. NICHOLSON: And can you discuss a little bit about
10 the content, what do you tell them when you're there?

11 MR. RUSS: We go over just kind of the safety brochures
12 and just more of what we've already given them --

13 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

14 MR. RUSS: -- as kind of --

15 MR. NICHOLSON: You're educating them on how to respond
16 if they get a call from a customer or are you educating them on
17 how you'll respond to an emergency?

18 MR. RUSS: Just how we respond so that, you know,
19 they'll know what to expect of us emergencies in --

20 MR. NICHOLSON: Emergencies such as a line break or
21 protocols?

22 MR. RUSS: Yeah, it could be either one.

23 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

24 MR. RUSS: Just whenever we're involved in emergency
25 response and we just let them what our, you know, what our

1 responsibility would be or what we would do. It's mainly just to
2 keep relations so that, you know, they're aware of what we can do
3 and what we -- how we respond to a different situation.

4 MR. CHHATRE: Would you -- in the fire and police
5 department can they turn the, your valve off the meter?

6 MR. RUSS: No. That's not something that we like, you
7 know, we like to do our own facility.

8 MR. NICHOLSON: What's your response time? Do you tell
9 them when they can expect you on scene?

10 MR. RUSS: Well, it varies. I think we put something in
11 here but our average response time has been about 45 minutes. So
12 it's what we tried to maintain.

13 MR. NICHOLSON: Have you met with the Birmingham Housing
14 Authority since the accident?

15 MR. GARDNER: Have we specifically --

16 MR. NICHOLSON: Yeah.

17 MR. GARDNER: Mixon and me?

18 MR. NICHOLSON: Yeah, yeah. I mean, you said you sent
19 the letters out telling them that people should call Alagasco
20 directly. Have you had any further conversations with them
21 about --

22 MR. GARDNER: I have not had conversations --

23 MR. RUSS: Yeah, not personally but --

24 MR. GARDNER: We've had the gas representatives do that.

25 MR. NICHOLSON: Barry, who would have done that? In

1 what capacity? Are you talking about attorneys or are you talking
2 about --

3 MR. RUSS: No.

4 MR. NICHOLSON: -- public awareness?

5 MR. GARDNER: Well, we've had a number of meetings with
6 the housing authority and representatives of Gate City, in
7 particular. I don't have the specific names or dates that they
8 met, but I know that they met with housing authority
9 representatives or customer service people, in particular.

10 MR. RUSS: Yeah. It would have been along two lines,
11 not necessarily public awareness would have been for, you know,
12 just being -- for the incident and what happens and, you know, how
13 we respond as a corporate entity just --

14 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

15 MR. RUSS: -- kind of meeting some of the needs. So it
16 would have been along those lines. And also when we installed a
17 new pipe or replacing the cast iron we had people out there --

18 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

19 MR. RUSS: -- constantly --

20 MR. NICHOLSON: Construction related.

21 MR. RUSS: -- wanted to know what was going on.

22 MR. NICHOLSON: So when the brochures would go out to
23 the customers because there was a Birmingham Housing Authority
24 overseeing these apartments, did they get a set of brochures as
25 well?

1 MR. GARDNER: In the --

2 MR. NICHOLSON: The actual office, the managers, the
3 site managers, property managers?

4 MR. RUSS: Yeah. I don't know if I would think they
5 would have but I couldn't say for sure that they did.

6 MR. GARDNER: Are you referring to the customer bill
7 insert or are you referring to the letter --

8 MR. NICHOLSON: Either one, a non-customer, a customer.

9 MR. GARDNER: Okay, because he made -- Nixon just made a
10 reference to correspondence following the accident.

11 MR. NICHOLSON: Because now there would have been
12 residents that might have thought if I smell gas I call the main
13 office, right? Would the main office have known or have been part
14 of your education program to know, hey I need to direct this
15 person to Alagasco or I'll send my tech out.

16 MR. RUSS: I don't know. I know we, you know, we send
17 them to the customers. But I'm not sure that we sent it
18 specifically to the housing authority.

19 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. That would be to their database
20 though, right?

21 MR. GARDNER: If they are a customer and get a gas bill
22 they would have gotten a brochure.

23 MR. NICHOLSON: Right. Okay. So a situation with like
24 an apartment building because that could be something similar
25 where there's a superintendent or someone overseeing the property,

1 but each individual has their own gas bill. There's nothing extra
2 you do to talk to the property management to educate them on how
3 they should direct tenants calling with complaints?

4 MR. RUSS: No.

5 MR. GARDNER: Not that I'm aware of.

6 MR. RUSS: As I say, the only thing we've done is, since
7 the incident, we've had conversations or a letter to the housing
8 authority. Prior to that, say for the housing authority, if their
9 office was served with gas then they would have gotten a gas bill.

10 MR. NICHOLSON: True.

11 MR. RUSS: That would be the only one.

12 MR. NICHOLSON: So can we get a copy of the letter that
13 you're sending out now? Is that -- that's part of the public
14 awareness program, that letter?

15 MR. RUSS: Well, it was not part of the public awareness
16 program, it was specific to --

17 MR. NICHOLSON: The incident.

18 MR. RUSS: -- the incident, it's something we did.

19 MR. NICHOLSON: But you said you sent it to other people
20 as well?

21 MR. RUSS: Yeah, we sent it outside the -- well, we can
22 get you a copy.

23 MR. NICHOLSON: Yeah, I'd like to see what they're
24 getting as to -- so you establish clear roles at this point that
25 they should be directing tenants to you, right, and that was the

1 intent of the letter to clarify everyone's --

2 MR. RUSS: Right.

3 MR. GARDNER: And we sent it to each of the residents
4 too.

5 MR. RUSS: Yeah.

6 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

7 MR. GARDNER: And we're not responsible for what the
8 housing authority did or didn't see in that regard either
9 (indiscernible) but obviously we saw it to clarify.

10 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. Ravi, you got anything you want
11 to follow up on?

12 MR. CHHATRE: I don't have any questions at this time.

13 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. I don't have anything else.
14 Keith?

15 MR. BLACKWOOD: No, sir.

16 MR. NICHOLSON: Nancy?

17 MS. McATEE: Did you guys cover heating safety while I
18 was not here?

19 MR. NICHOLSON: No. Go ahead and ask. Well, I did it a
20 little bit, but go ahead and ask your question Nancy.

21 MS. McATEE: Does your public awareness program cover
22 heating safety, i.e. don't use your oven to heat your home, what
23 happens when the pilot lights go out, et cetera?

24 MR. RUSS: I'm not sure.

25 MR. GARDNER: Just a moment let me see.

1 MR. RUSS: I know it covers appliances and the safe
2 operation, but specifically that I'm not sure.

3 MR. NICHOLSON: This goes to customers twice a year.

4 MR. CHHATRE: While you're looking, this is Ravi for a
5 question. Why do you guys want customers to call Alagasco first
6 and not 911?

7 MR. GARDNER: Why do we want them to call us first and
8 not 911? I think the answer to that would be that we believe that
9 that is the best thing for the customer to do for us to be the
10 most responsive to our customer safety.

11 MR. CHHATRE: The reason I'm asking, Bob, is because I
12 think earlier we were told that, Mixon mentioned, that typical, I
13 guess, typical response time is 45 minutes for a gas leak. But
14 the fire department can respond much sooner if they're located
15 locally. And the customer really would not know if the leak is
16 serious or (indiscernible) When the safety (indiscernible) for
17 not asking people.

18 MR. GARDNER: Well, I don't know that you said it was 45
19 minutes for a gas leak response, was it or was that the average
20 customer --

21 MR. RUSS: It was our average response time.

22 MR. GARDNER: For everything, not just a leak.

23 MR. RUSS: Well, the stance we take is that, you know,
24 once we get there we're better able to assess the situation and
25 make the area safe. That's kind of what -- we feel like we're the

1 best ones to do that if natural gas is involved. And even though
2 there probably are times where the fire department can get there
3 quicker than us, typically they still wait until we get there
4 before they do anything, you know, concerning either cutting gas
5 off or anything to do with our facilities.

6 MR. CHHATRE: I didn't really mean you versus fire
7 department. I was more thinking like you and the fire department
8 is what I was really thinking about.

9 MR. GARDNER: Well, I misunderstood your question
10 because you said first; I thought I heard you say first.

11 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. The question is in emergency you
12 are sure to say call us first, I mean, call us, period. And my
13 question is, why not say call us and call 911 or call 911 first
14 and then call us? What are the sequence you prefer for remanding
15 safety granted the fire department will wait for you, but they
16 might not evacuate because they have no experience in
17 (indiscernible).

18 MR. GARDNER: May I --

19 MR. NICHOLSON: Send a request in.

20 MR. GARDNER: I don't know what -- I don't have any
21 additional commentary on that other than what we've already said.

22 MR. NICHOLSON: What is when I call, if I'm a customer
23 and I smell the gas and you give me that 1-800 number and I call
24 that 1-800 number, who do I get and how is that person trained to
25 interface with me? What's she going to tell me to do or he at the

1 control center or wherever I'm calling? Is there a script that
2 they go through that says, get out of your house, call 911?

3 MR. RUSS: Yeah. Well, first they, you know, they do go
4 through training. As far as the emergency response training to
5 ask different questions of the customer and based on those
6 responses they determine kind of what the level of threat to the
7 customer is. And then at that point, I think we mentioned in the
8 brochure also, whether it's a faint or a strong smell. But they
9 have trained -- they are trained to go through those and then
10 follow a script to ascertain, you know, what the danger is when
11 they call, the best they can, just based on the phone
12 conversation.

13 MR. NICHOLSON: So can we get a copy of that as well?
14 Is that something that's written down somewhere?

15 MR. RUSS: Yeah.

16 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

17 MR. CHHATRE: With the same thought, would your
18 emergency responders contact or public awareness information, you
19 do that with the fire department also, right, police and fire?
20 For the first responders, were they given correspondence you have
21 or public awareness role and exchange information you have?

22 MR. GARDNER: Are you asking are the fire departments
23 invited to our public awareness meetings?

24 MR. CHHATRE: Yes.

25 MR. GARDNER: Yes.

1 MR. CHHATRE: And this is the same brochure they call
2 you guys first. Do you have an issue with that? Has any fire
3 department (indiscernible) saying, well, really we should be the
4 ones who should be called first?

5 MR. GARDNER: I'm not aware of that, but I'm also, no
6 I'm not in that loop to know.

7 MR. RUSS: You know, if it's, you know, fire or, you
8 know, something like that then obviously they do call them. But
9 as far as just smelling gas, you know, they call us first and
10 that's what we advise. And to your question, I didn't see
11 anything in there.

12 MR. NICHOLSON: I didn't either. Keith? You were
13 saying to what question, to Nancy's question?

14 MR. RUSS: Yeah, about the improper use of the oven for
15 heating.

16 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

17 MR. RUSS: We don't address it. I didn't see where we
18 addressed it.

19 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. I just want to leave that on the
20 record. Okay. I've got nothing else. Bob, any parting comments?

21 Okay, with that I will end the interview and go off
22 record. Once again, Bob and Nixon.

23 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

24

25

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 Russ and Gardner

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-14-MP-001

PLACE: Birmingham, Alabama

DATE: July 16, 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