

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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HOUSE EXPLOSION IN FIRESTONE,
COLORADO, APRIL 17, 2017

* Accident No.: DCA17FP005

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Interview of: DONALD OGBORN

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

Thursday,
May 11, 2017

APPEARANCES:

RAVI CHHATRE, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

JOSEPH GRATCOFSKY, Engineering Inspector
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
(PHMSA)

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

DOUG PRUNK, Fire Investigator
Frederick-Firestone Fire Protection District

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

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

KELLEY DUKE, Attorney
(On behalf of Mr. Ogborn)

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. CHHATRE: Good afternoon. Today is Thursday, May 11,
3 2017. We are currently at Frederick-Firestone Fire Protection
4 District's Business & Education Center located at 8426 Kosmerl
5 Place, Longmont, Colorado. We are meeting regarding the
6 investigation of explosion of a house located at 6312 Twilight
7 Avenue, Firestone, Colorado that occurred on April 17, 2017.

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

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

17 Also, I would like to inform Lieutenant Paramedic Donald
18 Ogborn that you are permitted to have one other person present
19 with you during the interview. This is a person of your choice --
20 your friend, family member, supervisor or, if you choose, no one
21 at all. Please state for the record your full name, spelling of
22 your name, the organization you work for and your title, business
23 contact information such as mailing address, email, phone, and
24 whom you have chosen to be present with you during your interview.

25 MR. OGBORN: My full name is Donald Ogborn, O-G-B-O-R-N. I'm

1 with Frederick-Firestone Fire Protection District as a lieutenant
2 paramedic. My email is [REDACTED]. My phone number is [REDACTED]
3 [REDACTED], and I've chosen Kelley Duke to be here with me.

4 MR. CHHATRE: Thank you very much for that. Now I would like
5 to go around and have each person introduce themselves. Please
6 state your name, spelling of your name, your title and the
7 organization that you represent, and your business contact
8 information starting from my left.

9 MR. GRATCOFSKY: My name is Joseph Gratcofsky, spelled
10 J-o-s-e-p-h, G-r-a-t-c-o-f-s-k-y. I'm with the -- I'm an
11 engineering inspector with the United States Department of
12 Transportation, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety
13 Administration, the Western Region at Lakewood, Colorado. My
14 phone number is [REDACTED], and my email address is [REDACTED]
15 [REDACTED].

16 MR. AJIBOYE: This is Gbenga Ajiboye, spelled as G-b-e-n-g-a,
17 A-j-i-b-o-y-e. I'm with PHMSA. I'm an engineer. I'm with Joseph
18 today on training. My email address is [REDACTED]
19 [REDACTED]. I'm with the Western Region, and my phone number
20 is [REDACTED].

21 MR. PRUNK: Doug Prunk with Frederick-Firestone Fire
22 Protection District. It's [REDACTED]; [REDACTED].

23 MR. LEONARD: Mike Leonard, that's L-e-o-n-a-r-d, with the
24 Colorado Oil & Gas Conservation Commission, Quality Assurance
25 Professional. Email address: [REDACTED]

1 [REDACTED]. My phone number is [REDACTED].

2 MS. DUKE: Kelley Duke, K-e-l-l-e-y, D-u-k-e, attorney for
3 the Frederick-Firestone Fire Protection District, business address
4 [REDACTED].

5 MR. McBRIDE: David McBride, Anadarko Petroleum Corporation.
6 It's M-c-B-R-I-D-E. My email address is
7 [REDACTED]. It's A-N-A-D-A-R-K-O. My phone
8 number is [REDACTED]; office number is [REDACTED].

9 MR. CHHATRE: Thank you very much.

10 INTERVIEW OF DONALD OGBORN

11 BY MR. CHHATRE:

12 Q. Mr. Ogborn, for the record tell us your background: formal
13 education, informal training, how long -- your work history, how
14 long you have with the District or any relevant prior experience.

15 A. So I've been with the District now for just over 5 years.
16 Prior to that, I worked for Granby Fire for a year, and I worked
17 for Federal Heights Fire Department prior to that. Educationwise,
18 I have a high school education with some college. I have a fire
19 academy Hazmat Technician -- Fire I, Fire II, Fire Officer, Hazmat
20 Tech, Paramedic. Yeah. So 20 years in the service total.

21 Q. And what are your responsibilities with the District here as
22 a lieutenant paramedic?

23 A. I'm a shift lieutenant, so I'm responsible for myself and one
24 or two other people at my station. I'm responsible for my
25 station, my apparatus while I'm there, call responses, public

1 inquiries, really, whatever comes up. And I'm also responsible
2 for training and preparing my crews.

3 Q. Okay. And what are your normal business hours?

4 A. 7 a.m. to 7 a.m.

5 Q. Okay. And what does your job entail as a paramedic? What do
6 you do?

7 A. Respond to and treat people that call 911.

8 Q. Okay. And what was your involvement in the accident --
9 explosion that occurred on April 17th?

10 A. I was the first arriving lieutenant on Engine 3403.

11 Q. Okay. 3403, okay. How did you find out about the explosion?

12 A. Through dispatch.

13 Q. Okay. So that day, just walk me through. You get a
14 dispatch, then what happened until you left the accident scene?

15 A. So we got the dispatch. We walked out the apparatus bay
16 door, because our engine was parked at the end of the apron. And
17 when I heard the address, I looked to my left, and I could see it.
18 And so we got completely geared up, got in the truck. I went en
19 route with dispatch, and I advised her at that time that I had a
20 visual on the house. The house was leveled. We had heavy flames.
21 We had heavy smoke.

22 As we drove -- it's, I don't know, a quarter of a mile-ish
23 from the station. So as we drove down Firestone Boulevard and we
24 turned up Oak Meadows Boulevard, there's a construction site.
25 There were people running out waving us into the construction

1 site. I had just been there like probably 2 weeks prior, so I
2 knew what was back there. I knew we didn't have good access to it
3 and, you know, we always try to go to the front side of the house,
4 the street side so that we kind of have our options of things to
5 do. So I told my engineer to keep going. I didn't know -- at the
6 time I thought they were just waving us down to come in that way.

7 As we turned to go back east on Twilight, we encountered a
8 ton of people; cars trying -- I don't know if they were neighbors
9 trying to leave. I don't know, you know, if it was people that
10 drove down to look and realized they couldn't get past it.

11 So we made our way through. We stopped. My engineer got
12 out, dry wrapped the hydrant. As we started to pull forward,
13 there was a flood of people that came running down the street at
14 us. So I told my engineer just make sure you don't run anybody
15 over. And so we pulled just past -- I gave an arrival report to
16 dispatch, gave a second report on our fire ground, which is our
17 standard procedure. I stepped out of the engine. I was met by --
18 at the time I didn't know who it was -- who just said, "I've been
19 told there's a little girl in the garage and there's a male in the
20 basement."

21 I told my engineer to gear up and get ready to go, we might
22 have somebody trapped. At that time I was confronted by another
23 party who started screaming and yelling vulgarities at me that
24 there's a little girl in the garage and a guy in the basement and
25 I need to get in there and do -- get them out and this and that.

1 And I honestly just looked at them and said, "Would you go in
2 there?" Because, I mean, I had nowhere to go. With that
3 information, I did air it, that we had the report of people
4 trapped. And I think at some point dispatch had told me on the
5 radio as well that they had reports.

6 So I went from the street side, which is on the north side of
7 the house, around the east side, just trying to get a visual of
8 what exactly had happened, if there was any tenable spaces for
9 anybody to be in. Due to the heat and the multiple explosions, I
10 couldn't hear real well, and it was really hot. I couldn't get
11 very close because of the fence on that side of the house.

12 I didn't make it all the way around the house. I came back.
13 I pulled our Blitzfire, which is a ground monitor, off the truck,
14 and when I put it down on the north side between that house and
15 the house to the west, as I was placing it, something in the
16 garage exploded. And I turned to my engineer, and I saw my
17 engineer up on top of the truck because he was already flowing
18 water onto the fire house. I asked him to send me water. Someone
19 came around the truck, said, "You're ready for water," and it was
20 the same guy I had encountered when I got out of the truck, and
21 then he disappeared and I had water.

22 So I started putting water on the house that was still
23 standing. I couldn't see it, but I could hear the water hitting
24 it, so I knew at least we were getting water onto it. I think at
25 that point -- at some point in here, someone had told me that

1 there was a patient back in the construction site. And so I aired
2 that I needed a medic unit to respond to the construction site for
3 the patient. I was doing a lot of coordinating. I don't recall
4 exactly what all I said. And I saw my other engine from Station
5 13401 come around the east side where I told them to come from.
6 And they stopped; they deployed another Blitzfire, would be to the
7 southeast side of the house. And then Chief Reisner arrived and
8 took command from there.

9 Our ladder truck 3417 arrived. The engineer from there came
10 up. Him and I deployed a hand line, just a smaller hose line, to
11 the same place that the Blitzfire was, but we were trying to put
12 the truck in the front yard -- or in the driveway out, and
13 anything on that side of the house that we could try to hit.

14 At that point a lot of people showed up. I, I don't know,
15 after that, who showed up in what order. And then, so we just
16 continued to apply water to the house that was still standing, as
17 well as to the house that had exploded, and we probably did that
18 for -- well, pretty much the rest of the night trying to get it to
19 go out. That was -- my primary assignment was to just continue
20 working on keeping water on those two houses. I know we put crews
21 in the other house to check for fire extension, to check for gas
22 and those kinds of things.

23 At one point I was assigned to take the Black Hills Energy
24 people to the back side of the house that was still standing so
25 that they could meter, or read -- try to read from any gas in the

1 basement of that house. I was assigned to man a hose line while
2 they removed the meter from the house that was still standing.
3 Those were kind of my primary assignments throughout that. And I
4 think I finally left about 1:30 in the morning.

5 Q. Okay. Now did you go back to the accident scene after you
6 left that night?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. When was that?

9 A. Wednesday afternoon.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. We were called back for -- to bring some equipment over, and
12 I think we were there just while they were metering the house
13 again next door that was still standing.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. Okay. And how long you stayed there?

17 A. Maybe an hour. And then I went back again on that Friday,
18 again to take some more equipment over, to pick up some equipment,
19 and I was there probably another hour.

20 Q. Now what kind of equipment?

21 A. Ladders, gas meters, boxes.

22 Q. From the house?

23 A. No. We were dropping those off.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. And then I think we brought, like, cases of water and stuff

1 over for the guys doing all the trench stuff.

2 Q. You said that you had been -- you were doing -- you went back
3 to help metering in the area, right?

4 A. To assist the Black Hills -- I think the second time was
5 Black Hills Energy, as well. They were using remote monitors.
6 And we had to remove a basement window for them, so we had to get
7 down in the window well, uncover -- and that might have been
8 Friday. I don't remember.

9 Q. So that will be the house -- if you are facing the ground
10 zero house, that'll be the house on the right-hand side?

11 A. Correct.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. So yeah, we were there -- we weren't doing any of the
14 metering. We were there just as they were going into the house.
15 We were moving stuff for them so that they could check things.

16 Q. Okay. So going back, as you approached the house from the
17 street side, how did the flames and how did the structure look
18 like to you?

19 A. It looked flat. It was -- I don't remember anything standing
20 upright. I remember everything being down, a lot of heat, a lot
21 of smoke, and a lot of little explosions. And I don't know -- I
22 think -- you know, I would have to assume that there's tires and
23 airbags on the cars and stuff that were -- but there was a lot of,
24 a lot of heat, a lot of smoke, and a lot of little explosions
25 going on.

1 Q. When you are saying explosions, is it like it will be a loud
2 noise, or what was --

3 A. Yeah. I mean --

4 Q. Or you could hear it because you're there?

5 A. No. It was -- I mean, they were loud bangs from within that
6 -- the pile.

7 Q. Any particular location on the residence there that the
8 flames were higher than the other locations, or the entire
9 building was engulfed in fire?

10 A. When we first got there, with all the smoke, it was hard to
11 tell. But it seemed like the mass concentration of it was in the
12 middle, kind of where everything fell.

13 Q. Now do you -- you were told there is a girl in the garage and
14 someone in the basement. Did you ever find anybody in the garage?

15 A. I never made it in the garage.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. I couldn't even make out the garage. Minus the car that you
18 could finally see the mold of and the pickup sitting in the
19 driveway, I couldn't have made out a garage.

20 Q. Okay. So that day, who connected the water hose? Your
21 engineer did?

22 A. No, a bystander.

23 Q. Oh, bystander connected the hose to --

24 A. To the hydrant, yes.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. And I was told he's an off-duty Denver firefighter.

2 Q. Okay. Now, do you remember how long you were doing the
3 watering, both the exploded house and the other home?

4 A. How long we were applying water? 1:00 in the morning --

5 Q. Oh, continuously.

6 A. 12:30, something like that.

7 Q. Continuously?

8 A. Just hitting -- we just kept having little pockets of flames
9 coming up that we were trying to put out.

10 Q. Now, is that unusual in your experience that you are putting
11 water and the flames are not going away?

12 A. It seemed weird, but I've never been on a call that
13 everything was laying on top of itself. So given what knowledge I
14 have of building construction, I would, you know, expect some of
15 that because it's hidden; we can't get to it. You know, normally
16 we would go in and pull the ceilings down or tear the walls apart
17 to get in to put those out, but all that was in the middle, so --

18 Q. Okay. But this is the first time you have seen a complete
19 house collapse?

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. Okay. Do you remember what time you arrived at the accident
22 scene?

23 A. Not exact. I know it was less -- I think it was 4 minutes.
24 So I think we were toned out at 4 -- or at 4:46, and it was like
25 4:50.

1 Q. So you got a call at 4:46?

2 A. I think that's the time.

3 Q. Okay. But, I mean, you didn't look and -- these are numbers
4 that was told you or how you --

5 A. No. We have computers that track all of our times.

6 Q. Okay. And that's where you saw that 4:46?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. Okay. Anything else you want to tell me that I did not ask
9 that might help me that we -- you know, give me some idea about
10 the accident scene as you arrived?

11 A. No. I mean, there's a lot that happened; a lot I don't
12 remember, just because it was very chaotic for -- at first.

13 Q I understand. But, I mean, your part you have here, if there
14 was something that you want to convey to me, please do.

15 A. Okay.

16 Q. No information is useless or not important for us, so -- and
17 I realize it has been 3 weeks since you came back and probably
18 many other incidents that's happened between now and then. But if
19 anything comes to your mind, let us know.

20 Thanks.

21 BY MR. GRATCOFSKY:

22 Q. This is Joseph Gratcofsky. Can you just explain the -- I
23 think you called it a fire blitz --

24 A. A Blitzfire?

25 Q. -- that's the ground unit, you were saying?

1 A. Yeah. So it's, it's a -- the nozzles that go on the end of
2 our hose, it's a much bigger one. I think it moves about 1,000
3 gallons a minute. But it's designed to be placed on the ground
4 and defensive fire. So in something that we're not --

5 Q. You set it there, correct?

6 A. Yeah. You set it down and it stays put, and you can adjust
7 the stream, you can adjust where it goes. It's just -- it's
8 useful in this type of a situation because I can set it down, put
9 water on this house, and then I'm free to do other things.

10 MR. GRATCOFSKY: Right. That's all I have. Thanks.

11 BY MR. PRUNK:

12 Q. Doug Prunk, Frederick-Firestone. You used the phrase "dry
13 wrap." Could you explain that for us when you did your supply
14 line and how we got to -- why the civilian was able to help with
15 that?

16 A. Yeah. So dry wrap just means that we -- we have webbing on
17 our hose and we've got the end of it bundled. So we'll wrap that
18 around the hydrant, and then lay -- we'll drive the truck and the
19 hose just comes off the truck. That way, if there's somebody at
20 the hydrant, once the truck gets, you know, far enough away it's
21 not tugging on the hose, you can unwrap it, and you can start
22 working on the hose while the engineer is attaching it to his end
23 of the truck.

24 Q Is this always done by that same engineer or can it be done
25 by someone else?

1 A. Anybody on the truck can do it; is that what you're asking?

2 Q. Or the next unit --

3 Q. Right. Or, yeah, or -- I mean, if it's a long hose lay or,
4 in something like this, you know, the next arriving -- it can be
5 an ambulance, it can be an engine, it doesn't matter, then they
6 can actually complete that connection for you.

7 Q. Okay. And then another quick thing. Have you -- I'm getting
8 somewhere, but -- have you been on vehicle fires before?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Have you heard the tires fail in a fire?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Was the noise inside that you were hearing consistent with
13 that, or on top of the vehicle tire releasing -- you know, going
14 back to the explanation of the noises you were hearing, can you
15 tell me what that'd be consistent with?

16 A. Some were that loud, kind of that noise level.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Several of them were much louder than that. And I'm not sure
19 if I said it, but when whatever -- when I set the ram down,
20 whatever let loose in there, there was actually debris that came
21 out with it that blew over the top of my head. Essentially, it
22 kind of forced me down just because I didn't know what it was --
23 some were lighter than that, but there was a lot that seemed to
24 not be tires, seemed louder.

25 MR. PRUNK: Okay. That's all I have. Thank you.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I have no questions.

2 MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

3 MR. McBRIDE: When you arrived --

4 MR. CHHATRE: Identify.

5 BY MR. McBRIDE:

6 Q. I'm David McBride. When you arrived on the scene, you used
7 the term the house was flat, basically. Was that when you arrived
8 on the scene or was it sometime after that you kind of noticed
9 that it was already kind of flat, or was it already in that kind
10 of condition when you kind of --

11 A. To the best of my recollection, it was down.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. I've seen the arrival videos on the news -- or before I got
14 there, and I honestly do not remember the house looking like that.

15 MR. McBRIDE: Okay. Thank you, that's all I have.

16 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. If not -- anybody have any follow-up
17 questions or salient points?

18 If not, thank you very much for stopping by this late in the
19 evening. I appreciate your help. Again, if something you
20 remember, something comes up to you in your mind, hey, this might
21 be worthwhile at least me knowing it, feel free to contact us.

22 MR. OGBORN: So I guess I do, just sitting here kind of
23 talking about when, when Chief Prunk was asking. We did have
24 flame in the middle of the house that was a weird color and
25 wouldn't -- I just, it -- I remember seeing that now -- that was a

1 different color and wouldn't go out. It seemed like we would put
2 it out and it would come back, and we would put it out and it
3 would come back. And I have never seen that.

4 BY MR. CHHATRE:

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. So I just -- when we were kind of going around the room, I
7 remembered.

8 Q. Sure. And what color was the flame?

9 A. Green and blue, I guess.

10 Q. And you call it weird. Is that because the normal fires
11 don't look like that?

12 A. No. And you put enough water -- I mean, you put enough water
13 in there and it should have easily gone out, but it just kept
14 coming back.

15 Q. It just kept coming back. And at different locations in the
16 house, or just one or two?

17 A. No, just the same spot.

18 Q. Only one location, you said. Do you remember roughly where
19 it was? On the house, if you look at the (indiscernible), is it
20 middle, right-hand, left-hand?

21 A. Looking from the street, it would be middle to the right-ish,
22 towards the house that was still standing.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. But, I mean, I was also looking at it from a farther view, so
25 -- but yeah.

1 Q. But definitely it was inside the house?

2 A. I'm sorry?

3 Q. Definitely it was inside the house?

4 A. It was in the basement, yes.

5 Q. Okay. Thank you so much. All these things help.

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. I appreciate, appreciate your help.

8 MR. CHHATRE: Off the record.

9 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: HOUSE EXPLOSION IN FIRESTONE,
 COLORADO, APRIL 17, 2017
 Interview of Donald Ogborn

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA17FP005

PLACE: Longmont, Colorado

DATE: May 11, 2017

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



Barbara Phelps
Transcriber