National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

VIA Email

November 8, 2018

Mr. Sean Devlin:

Reference: **Interviews for the September 13, 2018 NiSource fatality accident that occurred in Lawrence/Andover, Massachusetts – NTSB Accident Number PLD18MR003**

Attached are transcripts for the interviews of Feeney Brothers employees that were conducted for the above referenced accident. Please have the employees listed below review their transcript for accuracy and make any necessary changes.

To accommodate any revisions/clarifications needed, please prepare an individual errata document as required for each interview. Provide a new name for the document and ensure the name is the original file name with the word "errata" in the file name.

You may either reference the relevant page and line number along with the suggested change or redline the renamed copy of the document. Please initial any changes when marking up or redlining the original document.

For each transcript, please provide the status as indicated below and checkmark one of the three statements below, even if there are no changes.

Please submit replies to me via email no later than **November 14, 2018.**

Please note that these transcripts must be treated as confidential at this time. These transcripts are for your use only and not for release outside the investigation. If you have any questions, please contact me by phone or email.

Thank you for your assistance and cooperation,

Roger D. Evans

Senior Pipeline Incident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
Office of Railroad, Pipeline, and Hazardous Materials Investigations
[redacted]

Name: Matthew Mendes

Department Feeney Brothers Utility Services

Title: Lead Laborer

Date of Interview: Sept. 17th, 2018

I have reviewed my transcript(s) from the above referenced accident and:

- ☐ I have no comments to make.
- ☐ My comments are submitted herewith.
- ☑ My comments are marked on the attached copy.

[redacted]

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:	
MERRIMACK VALLEY RESIDENTIAL GAS FIRES AND EXPLOSIONS SEPTEMBER 13, 2018	Accident No.: PLD18MR003

Interview of: MATTHEW MENDES

Northern Essex Community College
Lawrence, Massachusetts

Monday,
September 17, 2018

APPEARANCES:

ROGER EVANS, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

JAMES SOUTHWORTH, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

DARREN LEMMERMAN, Investigator
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
(PHMSA)

RICHARD WALLACE, Director, Pipeline Safety Division
Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities,

DAVID NELSON, Operations Manager
Columbia Gas

EOIN BEIRNE, Esq.
Mintz Levin Law Firm
(On behalf of Mr. Mendes)

I N D E X

I N T E R V I E W

(10:42 a.m.)

MR. EVANS: We are on the record with Matthew Mendes. Good morning. Today is September 17th. It is now 10:42 a.m. My name is Roger Evans and I am the investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board in Washington, D.C. We are at the Essex Community College in Lawrence, Mass.

The reason for this interview is talking about the South Lawrence multi-residential explosion that occurred on September 13th. This case number is PLD18MR003.

This interview is being transcribed -- excuse me -- is being recorded and may be transcribed at a later date. A copy of the transcript will be provided to the interviewee prior to being entered into the public docket.

Mr. Mendes, you are permitted to have one other person present during the interview. This is a person of your choice -- a supervisor, friend, family member or nobody at all.

Please state the spelling of your name and who you have chosen to represent you today.

MR. MENDES: Matthew Mendes, M-A-T-T-H-E-W, M-E-N-D-E-S, and here with me is Eoin.

MR. EVANS: Okay, Eoin. And can you please introduce your affiliation and your spelling of your name?

MR. BEIRNE: Eoin Beirne, Mince Levin Law Firm in Boston, for Mr. Mendes, E-O-I-N, B-E-I-R-N-E.

MR. EVANS: Thank you. We would now like to go around the room and have each of the participants give the spelling of their name and their affiliation and -- starting to my left.

MR. WALLACE: Richard, R-I-C-H-A-R-D, Wallace, W-A-L-L-A-C-E, I'm the Director of the Pipeline Safety Division for the Department of Public Utilities in Massachusetts.

MR. NELSON: David Nelson, D-A-V-I-D, N-E-L-S-O-N, Columbia Gas, Operations Manager.

MR. LEMMERMAN: Darren, D-A-R-R-E-N, Lemmerman, L-E-M-M-E-R-M-A-N, PHMSA AID, Accident Investigation Division.

MR. EVANS: And for the transcriber, there's a person that's not in the room, James Southworth, J-A-M-E-S, Southworth, S-O-U-T-H-W-O-R-T-H. He is out of the room. He will be joining us momentarily.

INTERVIEW OF MATTHEW MENDES

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. Okay. Again, thank you for coming today, appreciate that. This is important stuff that we're, you know, trying to find out about and we're just trying to get some simple details sorted out and it's probably going to be a brief interview actually, so, it won't be too bad.

So, Matthew, let's just, let's begin by just telling us a little bit about your background, and how long you've been at this company, and what you do for them, what your job title is, all that type of stuff? Let's start with that.

A. My background is before I came here, was classic car restoration. I've been with the company for 1 year, two seasons, because of when I started. My job is I'm a laborer. Job title with who I work with is lead laborer.
Q. And the company name that you work for?
A. Feeney Brothers.
Q. And can you please spell that?
A. F-E-E-N-E-Y, B-R-O-T-H-E-R-S.
Q. Okay. And you say you've been there about a year, which is, you say two seasons --?
A. Two seasons because of when I started.
Q. Okay. Okay. And, lead laborer is, is there such a thing as a laborer and a lead laborer and a senior laborer or is it just, is there a pecking order for all this, or not?
A. I think it's, I don't know.
Q. Oh, okay. That's okay. And, what do you, what are your tasks that your normally do?
A. On a day to day?
Q. Yes.
A. Start just by setting signs up, going over, you know, our briefing. I don't really know what else, because every day it's different, and I don't, you know, I don't just do the same thing every day.
Q. But do you work on gas restorations primarily, or do you work, do you work down in the pit?

A. We do the tie-ins.
Q. Okay, but are you actually involved with, you know, valves and fittings and all that type of thing?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. And, have you had OQ training since you started with this company?
A. Yes.
Q. Do you recall, perhaps you could tell us some of the OQs that you've had?
A. Dealing with specialized equipment, a lot of the, all the hands on that we need.
Q. Anything else you can think of?
A. AOCs, there's more, but I can't think of them.
Q. What about confined space entry? Any sort of thing like that? Safety related type things?
A. I mean, we go over safety every day. I don't think there's an OC for that, I mean a OQ for that.
Q. Okay. So, let's, let's start at the -- well first off, on the day of this incident, what was your role? What were you doing that, this day?
A. We were tying in the plastic to the cast iron.
Q. Okay. And this is a photograph of that, and for the transcriber, I'm looking at a photograph of the excavation where all the tie-ins were occurring. On the, were you down in this pit yourself here, actually doing work? And turning wrenches?

Installing the gauges and -

A. Everything from step by step, from step one to the finish step.

Q. Okay. Have you had any tie fitting training in the past?

A. No, just working with Feeney.

Q. Okay. How about any, any plumber work, like household plumbing or anything like that?

A. Nope.

Q. Okay. How about anything to do with electrical contracting work? Anything like, you ever done anything like that?

A. Nope.

Q. Okay. Have you been to a trade school at all?

A. Just for automotive.

Q. Okay. When you said you worked for that custom car place, what was your specialty there?

A. Just getting it ready for body work.

Q. So, not mechanical, electrical, or any of that stuff.

A. No. That was dealt for somebody else.

Q. Okay. Okay, so I'd like you to just kind of, let me describe it this way, if I were writing a story and I wanted to do an essay on what you did that day and you wanted to include all the timelines, all the times, what you heard, who you talked to, who you were with, so that when I was finished, I could, you know, I'd read the essay and; Wow, I know what you were doing that day. To the best of your recall, can you kind of, just kind of, go through

all the details, who you talked to, who you worked with, you know, what time you heard something, what time you saw something, what time you smelled something? Can you start with the when you arrived at the scene and pulled the metal and the metal was pulled away from the excavation? Can you start right there?

A. Which metal being pulled would you like?

Q. The --

A. Like the piece I got cut out?

Q. No, the cover.

A. Oh, the plates. Okay.

Q. The plates.

A. Well we set up our signs. Had our meeting, tailgate meeting.

Q. Excuse me. Can you give me any, any sort of time whenever you're making these statements?

A. I don't know what time we pulled the plates. I arrived at, you know, 6:50 in the morning.

Q. 6-5-0?

A. Yep.

Q. Okay.

A. I don't keep time, I guess, I don't. I wouldn't know when we pulled the plates.

Q. Okay. So the plates are away from the pit, and now you're here. What did you do next and at approximately what time?

A. Well, once the plates are pulled, we got in the hole. We set up our gauges. We tapped one side of the by-pass, purged out the

other side, and then once that was purged, we set up all the saddles for the valves, pressure tested our tools, you know, in the saddles, make sure that we didn't have any leaks, and then we begin to drill and tap. Once it's been drilled and tapped, we set up our bags. Got our bags, you know, ready. We already knew the procedure, step by step, on which bags to drop first, second, third, fourth. At that, I still don't know what time it is. I'm not allowed to have a phone on me when I'm in the hole. Once the bags are set up, we had our three gauges set, they all read the nine and a half. They all read the same, nothing different. Can I see that?

MR. EVANS: Sure.

A. So, once we got our saddles on and everything's been drilled and tapped, we set up our bags. We dropped one bag first and watched our gauges for about fifteen minutes to make sure that there was no change in pressure. And then, after our fifteen minutes is passed, we jump to our second bad, drop that one. Also check the gauges some more to make sure that we didn't have any drop in pressure in either side. Then from there, we dropped our third and fourth bags. We did same amount of time, fifteen minutes. From there we open the vents, made sure that we had a good stop, which we did. And then we proceeded to cut out the old section. Once the old, once the old section was cut out, we capped off one side ~~and~~, of the cast iron, and then we cut off the end of the plastic to dry fit, got our measurement, installed the

plastic, put it together, electofused it, waited, because we have, you know, times that we have to wait, and then, once that was connected and time's been, you know, you waited your time, and we proceeded to finish with the plastic to cast iron connection. Once that was connected, torqued down to spec, we proceeded to take the saddles and bags out of the side we capped and then once we did that, I mean, once we pulled the bags, we soaped up everything, made sure nothing was leaking, that way we had a good seal, we had a good seal, we finished breaking that side down. On the side that we tied into, once we were tied in, we vented it out, purged out the system, made sure that it was good to go, and then we deflated the bags, but didn't pull anything off, soap tested everything, made sure that we had no leaks, which we did not, and then we proceeded to pull the bags and put our plugs in place. Once we did that, we began to break the rest of it down. We shut the valves on the by-pass, pulled out the by-pass, pulled our gauges, and then once I pulled the last gauge, we were still good with numbers for pressure, and ~~then when I open~~, after I pulled the gauge, and I proceeded about 5 minutes from the time I pulled the gauge to the time I was pulling the Tee off the main for the by-pass, is when things went sideways.

Q. And describe sideways.

A. Unexpected, you know, we go from a low pressure to high pressure coming through.

Q. And, do you happen to know what that pressure was?

A. I don't. I didn't read the gauge.
Q. Um-hum.
A. I was just standing there to keep the pressure (psi) down until someone could get me something to put on top of it to stop gas flow so I could get out of the hole.
Q. Okay. Just so we know for the record, it, as far as this, this crew you had that day, you had yourself, and we know there was a person by the name of Jose --
A. Yep.
Q. -- and we know, you know, by the book Billy was there. Right?
A. Oh yeah, definitely by the book.
Q. Right. So, we have those, now we have three people that we know of that were there. Who else was there at day besides those three?
A. We have Tony, who's our truck driver.
Q. Okay. And who else?
A. Earlier in the morning, we had our operator, but he left to take care of some family things.
Q. Okay. And what's his name?
A. Jason, I don't know his last name.
Q. Okay. Did Jason do the, took, took the cover away?
A. Yeah, that's all he did.
Q. That's all he did? Okay, great. Okay, so just for a reference, the, when you did the, the fusion, right? Any idea

what time that might have been?
A. I don't know the times. I wouldn't know what time we did this, or this, or even when we pulled the plates.
Q. Well how about the wait time? Do you know how many minutes that was?
A. ~~That told us finish~~ twenty minutes for cool down time or clamp time, so we left if for a little over that. We actually left it for a half hour.
Q. Okay. Do you have an OQ for plastic pipe?
A. Yeah. I believe so.
Q. Okay. So when, when this, I mean you say went sideways, which I like that term, it's about, it's about as good as it gets actually. So it went sideways on you. Who was around the scene at that time?
A. Everybody.
Q. So the four other people.
A. Yeah.
Q. Truck driver --
A. Truck driver, Billy, Jose, Rich Bedard, and then once everything went, is when phone calls started going out to try to figure out what's going on.
Q. Okay. And whenever this occurred, were there sounds, other outside sounds, besides, you know, you know the, what was in the excavation area. Did you hear anything else?
A. Not in the hole, no. But outside there was houses that were

that had sirens from the fire trucks, so like that.
Q. Um-hum. Do you recall if the, if the fire trucks were heard before it went sideways, or after it went sideways?
A. Before there was firetrucks and ambulances and police cars that happened before we finished, you know, what we were doing.
Q. So was that less than an hour before you finished, or maybe less than half hour before you finished? Any recall to that?
A. Less than an hour, I know that.
Q. Less than an hour before you finished you heard fire trucks? Okay. And did you hear fire trucks kind of like from multiple directions?
A. The first one that went, went a opposite direction. They weren't coming anywhere hear us.
Q. Okay.
A. And then, after them, it was once this went sideways, is when they were going everywhere, every which way around lines you could possibly get off.
Q. Okay. Did you notice anything on the horizon?
A. No, I didn't notice anything.
Q. Did you not see smoke or anything from --
A. Not at first. I heard the officer that we had as a detail say that there was fires and then we noticed that it was coming out of the chimneys.
Q. And did you notice several of those?
A. Yeah.

Q. I mean like less than 10?
A. I noticed three.
Q. Okay. Okay. And, once, once this went sideways, what happened then in the excavation area?
A. Well once I got the gas to stop coming out of the main, which we used the section of the by-pass that has a valve to it, once we put that on there with the valve shut, we were like; Okay, you know, so we got the gas to stop there, and then it was get out of the hole and wait for further commands.
Q. Okay. So, when you're in the hole and you put the, the valve and the by-pass and all that, did you, any sense of time as far as, I mean, it was at a high pressure coming out, screaming out, you could hear it, I guess, correct?
A. Yeah, any change, the change in pitch and flow.
Q. Okay, so it was a decreasing pitch?
A. It was a roaring pitch. It was --
Q. A roaring pitch that was going --
A. Out of it.
Q. Coming out, was it, was the roar subsiding though after a bit of time?
A. Later on in the day is when it subsided.
Q. Okay. So if we were to say, you know, from the time that it went sideways to the time that it subsided, any idea in, you know, is that less than 3 hours? Less than twenty minutes? Is it less than 4 hours? Any, any idea at all?

A. I'd say, less than four, I guess, I don't, I was just running around --
Q. Okay.
A. -- doing what I was told.
Q. And I can tell you from our work, when things like this happen, time frames go crazy, so --
A. Yeah, we just --
Q. -- but less than four is, that's good that you have that number. That's okay. You say less than 4 hours. Probably more than an hour though?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. Between one and 4 hours, something like that. And then once that subsided, were you told of any sort of pressures along the way? Did you hear any numbers repeated from anybody?
A. I didn't hear any numbers. I just know that I was told that it's good to put a plug in it after it subsided, once it got back down to where it should have been, or less than where it was. We were able to plug it back up.
Q. Um-hum. Did you feel that was safe to put the plug in? I mean, was it, did you feel that was a little risky to put a plug in this as this time?
A. I was nervous as hell to get in there because once you deal with it, you know what I mean, you don't want to deal with it again.
Q. Right.

A. So, but it was less than what it normally is.
Q. Okay. Well it's only human to be, I mean, I can't imagine what that would be like.
A. Yeah, it's not fun.
Q. Yeah. Okay, that's all I have for right now.
BY MR. WALLACE:
Q. Richard Wallace speaking. I have a few questions. The by-pass, when you heard the sirens, was that in the open position?
A. I don't know. I'm just trying to think of where I was at that time and what part of it I was doing.
Q. What particular tasks for this by-pass did you perform?
A. The whole thing.
Q. When you say the whole thing, could you describe that for me?
A. Installed it. Tapped it. Put it all together. I did every step to that by-pass, from beginning to end.
Q. Have you had training on doing this?
A. Installing a by-pass for every, every tie-in that we do, the procedure will have us install one.
Q. I guess what I'm asking is, has Feeney Brothers ever did any hands-on formal training to show you how to do a by-pass set up?
A. No.
Q. Do you have qualifications to do this particular work?
A. To do the work, yes. For the whole thing, or the by-pass?
Q. For the whole thing.
A. Yes.

Q. You said you were doing tapping, --
A. Yes.
Q. -- you were setting it up.
A. I have the qualifications for the specialized equipment that we're using, and everything we did in the hole.
Q. For the, for the equipment, but --
A. Correct.
Q. -- right? I guess what I'm looking for is that, at any point in time, did you get any training where you set up a mock by-pass system? Like you go through the whole procedure in a training session of how to go about this?
A. Only when Billy walked me step by step through it, was when I first learned. They don't do any of that in the training.
Q. So there's no, there's no classroom training for you?
A. Not for by-pass, no.
Q. Okay. Not for by-pass, okay. Did you take any tests under, you're qualified under NGA, Northeast Gas Association's OQ program?
A. Yep.
Q. Did you take any particular tests for doing a by-pass --
A. Not that I recall.
Q. -- in a tap, in a tie over?
A. The tapping and the stopping with the specialized equipment, yes. The tie-in piece, no, except the creating the piece that you are installing and the couplings that you use.

Q. Okay. Do you recall, did you take any breaks in the morning?
A. Yeah, we take a coffee break every morning.
Q. Do you remember about what time that was?
A. Yeah, the -- went and got coffee at 9 o'clock.
Q. Had any of the by-pass and tie-over work been completed at that time?
A. The by-pass piece was, ~~was~~ (mm) put in place and then tapped and purged before I had my coffee.
Q. Was it active?
A. Yes, gauges were reading nine and a half on both sides.
Q. Okay. So continue on with that. So you had a coffee break and at that time the by-pass was in process, it was working, --
A. Yep.
Q. -- did you, had you done any of the tie-over at that time?
A. Nope. I took my coffee break first and then we proceeded to put our equipment onto the pipe to get it ready for the next step.
Q. Which would be?
A. Well once the equipment's up there, is when we put all our bags in in a specific order, you know, we have a protocol that tells us, or a procedure that tells us what goes first, step by step.
Q. So you had done that particular process.
A. Yes.
Q. Did you have a lunch period during that day?
A. We usually take one around twelve o'clock. Ours was a little

bit later. We took our break when the electrofusion coupling was cooling down.

Q. Okay. When you, when you made your tie-over, and you opened the valve, did you open the valve for the --

A. I did not open the valve.

Q. Who opened the valve?

A. I don't know.

Q. Did you hear any unusual noises in the excavation? Were you in the excavation at the time? And if so --

A. When --

Q. -- did you hear any unusual noise?

A. I didn't hear any, anything out of the ordinary. I was in the hole because someone opened the valve and then I soap test everything to make sure that we don't have any leaks.

Q. Were you the individual who broke down the by-pass?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you look at the gauges at that time?

A. Yes, and they still read nine and a half.

Q. Still read nine and a half. Okay. Were there any gauges on this set up when you made the last tie-in over for the new main to the old main?

A. Yes. The last, the two gauges on the cast iron were still in place until the by-pass. Once the by-pass valves were shut and the by-pass taken out, the 2-inch plastic was taken out of the hole, is when I took the gauges out.

Q. And when you took the by-pass out of the hole, did you take the fittings (mm) off of the main at that time?
A. I was beginning to on the side that went sideways.
Q. Alright. Thank you. That's all I have.
BY MR. NELSON:
Q. Dave Nelson. So when you say sideways, when you removed the fitting from the by-pass from the main, what happened?
A. Well, I took the gauge out and I ~~cold~~ (mm) put the plug on by hand, and then when I took the, ~~the~~ (mm) fitting out of the main, that was originally holding the by-pass, as I was unscrewing it and I got towards the top, is when the pressure changed because it came out of my hand and we couldn't get a plug onto it.
Q. So a couple minutes prior that you said that the gauge stayed when you removed the by-pass.
A. The 2-inch plastic piece.
Q. So, --
A. The Tees were still there.
Q. In what position was the valve at that time?
A. It was closed so I could get the plastic out.
Q. And then once they were closed, you did what?
A. Once they were closed --
Q. -- and separated.
A. -- and separated, is when I proceeded to take out the gauges.
Q. Okay. Who fused the electrofuse coupling?
A. I did.

Q. And did you mark the main with the time at which you did that?
A. Yes, it should be on the coupling.
Q. I'm good for now.
BY MR. LEMMERMAN:
Q. Darren Lemmerman. I'm just going to probably ask the same questions that these guys have asked, a little bit, but I wanted to horn in just on a little bit more detail. You had talked about on a tie-in side you purged it and then you ~~deflected~~ deflated (mm) the bags and found no leaks and you soaped everything up, right? Is that?
A. On which part?
Q. It would be on the by-pass part. Not the capped end. So I'm at the bags three and four, when you deployed the bags three and four.
A. Well, no, because three is on the side that we capped and four is on this side.
Q. Okay, oh, yeah, so --
A. So you have bag one is right behind the cap.
Q. This is one?
A. And then that one was two, three and then four.
Q. Okay.
A. According to procedure.
Q. One, two, bag three -- this would be two, and four, right?
A. Um hmm.
Q. So when you deflated bags two and four, did you hear sirens

or any noise going on, or --
A. Not at that time, no.
Q. Okay. So that's what I was trying to get the siren timeline. Then you shut the by-passes off, right?
A. Yeah.
Q. After you deflated these two bags you turned the by-pass valves off?
A. Once we pulled the bag, we didn't pull the bags all the way out, we just deflated them so the gas could flow through. I soap tested everything. Everything was holding. We didn't have any leaks. And then, once we did that, is when we pulled the top sections out, so we could put the plugs in. There's a tool that inserts plugs.
Q. Okay.
A. And then once the plugs were in, we take that tool off, you soap up your plug, make sure you're not leaking. We were not leaking at that time. And we proceeded to our next step.
Q. And the next step was?
A. To shut the valves on the by-pass.
Q. To shut these valves, and these valves are part of the tap then? Or is there valves in here that we're not really seeing in the picture?
A. Yeah, they're on this, like right here where the white is. So we shut that and then there's a cap on top of that, which you can see right there, --

Q. Okay, yep.
A. -- take that plug out. Put rags in there to keep gas down so we can get the Tee's off to put a plug on. But we didn't get to that point.
Q. Yeah. Okay, so when you pulled the gauges, that would have been the next step after you shut these off?
A. I shut these off.
Q. Yep.
A. Pulled the 2-inch plastic by-pass piece out.
Q. Did you hear any sirens when you pulled this separate piece out?
A. I don't know.
Q. Okay.
A. But once this was pulled, and, you know, these valves were shut, the by-pass was taking out, I took this gauge out.
Q. Did you --
A. Well actually before this gauge, we took that gauge.
Q. Okay, so the first gauge out, this would be the last gauge out.
A. Right, and then when I took this gauge out I plugged it by hand, no problems --
Q. Yeah.
A. -- as I went to go take this out --
Q. Right, so would you again going back to your environment, your surroundings as far as seeing people coming from their home,

or sirens, or the fires, had you seen any of that stuff yet when you were working, pulling those gauges out?
A. No, I don't remember.
Q. Okay. So then you pulled the gauges out then you went to pull this Tee out, it went sideways. So when it went sideways, did you hear anything at that point?
A. Just the officer running around saying that there was fires coming out of the chimneys and stuff.
Q. Okay. But before you saw that --
A. I was standing on it trying to keep --
Q. Right, right, so this officer wasn't doing much when you pulled these gauges out.
A. No.
Q. Pretty much simultaneously when you --
A. Doing a detail, that's what he was doing.
Q. Okay, so that's about the time frame is when you pulled the plug out, went sideways, you started getting calls, and that's kind of, I mean, kind of, we're trying to fit the timeline real close and when some of the stuff happens, so it's --
A. Yeah, I couldn't tell you the time when a police officer drove by, or a fire engine there --
Q. No, I'm just, yeah, audibly, I guess, it was --
A. I don't even know what time it was when we --
Q. Right, yeah, I'm just trying not the watch time, but just pointing the work project in the morning --

A. Yeah, what I, yeah. But it's tricky because when you're working, you don't think of the time, you know what I mean, and it just goes away. It's just, you might think it was 2 minutes, but it might have been twenty. You --

Q. Exactly, okay. So you aren't really sure at what work point you were at when you started hearing the --

A. Right, correct.

Q. -- environment changing. People come, or what, do you remember when people came out of the house, in this area?

A. The first house was after we got the valve off for the by-pass. Once we got that inside the main, and had the valve shut so gas would stop flowing, is when one of the first houses the lady said she smelled gas.

Q. Okay. Do you remember how that related to when she came out versus you heard the sirens in the area? Or after that?

A. When we saw the house from where the picture was taken, straight across, you could see it coming out of the chimney, all the fire engines flying around, coming from every which angle you could possibly think of, then she came out and then we went house to house, got everyone out.

Q. Okay, so it was approximately when you put the plug back in. You took your foot off?

A. Yeah.

Q. (Indiscernible) --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- or somewhere around there, give or take a little bit. Okay.
A. And then our goal was to just get everyone out, safe, and phone calls were already being made.
Q. That's the only real thing I had to ask on that, so thanks.
A. Okay.
MR. EVANS: This is Roger Evans. Do you have any questions Jim?
MR. SOUTHWORTH: No, no. questions.
BY MR. EVANS:
Q. This is Roger Evans. You said you took a 9 o'clock coffee break? How, 10-minute break? Fifteen-minute break? Half hour?
A. Usually 10 minutes.
Q. Okay. And then you say you took a lunch, and that was after the fusion piece had been assembled, right? And fused up and everything for the waiting period?
A. Once it was fused, yes, the waiting period.
Q. Okay, and then, approximately did you, is it a half hour lunch? A hour lunch?
A. It's a half hour.
Q. Okay. Half hour lunch, sometime after the fusing, fusion, okay. And you were saying that, you said, I just want to get this straight, so the other person that was, let's just call this the people in the wrench -- people in the, in the excavation, the wrench turner type people that are actually turning wrenches and

doing physical OQ kind of work, right?
A. Um-hum.
Q. So that was yourself, and that was Jose? Correct?
A. Yes. Jose is there to help get me what I need as far as tools, plugs and he helps me with all this.
Q. And the other, there's another person there as well?
A. Tony's in the truck breaking things down or putting them together.
Q. Okay. Is there, I mean, who else is in the, in the, in the trench with you there?
A. Jose.
Q. Just you and Jose.
A. Yep.
Q. Okay. Then as far as Jose's role that day, I mean, were you the doer and he was the supplier?
A. Yeah, that's pretty much --
Q. Providing what you needed?
A. Yes.
Q. And you were doing the work.
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. That's all I have.
MR. WALLACE: I'm all set, thank you.
BY MR. NELSON:
Q. Dave Nelson. How long of the time from the time you pulled the gauge 'til you pulled the by-pass?

A. The last final piece to the by-pass?
Q. From when you pulled the gauge, you know, when pulled the by-pass and it went sideways.
A. Well I pulled the plastic first. So once these valves are shut and I pulled this out from this point to here was 2 minutes. And then from pulling the gauge, putting a plug in to it, to pulling the valve and tee off was less than 5.
Q. Thank you. That's all I have.
MR. EVANS: Okay.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm good thank you.
MR. EVANS: Okay.
MR. SOUTHWORTH: I'm good.
MR. EVANS: I'm good. This concludes the interview. Appreciate you coming in today. We're off the record with the witness here. Thank you very much.
(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:	MERRIMACK VALLEY RESIDENTIAL GAS FIRES AND EXPLOSIONS SEPTEMBER 13, 2018 Interview of Matthew Mendes
ACCIDENT NUMBER:	PLD18MR003
PLACE:	Lawrence, Massachusetts
DATE:	September 17, 2018

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.

[redacted]

Deborah Dowling Sweigart
Transcriber