



**National Transportation Safety Board**  
Washington, D.C. 20594

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**V I A E m a i l**

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





# National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

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Name: Jose Madera, Jr.  
Department: Feeney Brothers Utility Services  
Title: Laborer  
Date of Interview: Sept. 16<sup>th</sup>, 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.



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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MERRIMACK VALLEY RESIDENTIAL GAS  
FIRES AND EXPLOSIONS  
SEPTEMBER 13, 2018

\* Accident No.: PLD18MR003

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: JOSE L. MADERA, JR.

Northern Essex Community College  
Lawrence, Massachusetts

Sunday,  
September 16, 2018

## APPEARANCES:

ROGER EVANS, Investigator in Charge  
National Transportation Safety Board

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

DAVID NELSON, Operations Manager  
Columbia Gas

EOIN BEIRNE, Esq.  
Mintz Levin  
(On behalf of Mr. Madera)

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I N T E R V I E W

(11:52 a.m.)

1  
2  
3 MR. EVANS: We're on the record with Jose L. Madera, Jr.  
4 Good morning, still morning. Today is September 16, 2018. It is  
5 now 11:52. My name is Roger Evans. I'm the investigator in  
6 charge for this accident for the National Transportation Safety  
7 Board out of Washington, D.C.

8 We are at the Essex Community College in Lawrence, Mass.  
9 This interview is being conducted as part of the investigation  
10 into the South Lawrence multiple housing explosion accident that  
11 occurred in Lawrence, Mass, on September 13, 2018. The NTSB case  
12 number for this event is PLD18MR003.

13 This interview is being recorded. May be transcribed at a  
14 later date. A copy of the transcript will be provided to the  
15 interviewee for review prior to being entered into the public  
16 docket.

17 Mr. Madera, you are permitted to have one other person  
18 present during the interview. This is a person or your choice --  
19 supervisor, friend, family member or nobody at all. Please state  
20 for the record the full spelling of your name, and who you have  
21 chosen to represent you today.

22 MR. MADERA: My name is Jose Madera. It's spelled J-o-s-e,  
23 middle initial L, last name Madera, M-a-d-e-r-a, and the suffix is  
24 Junior.

25 MR. EVANS: Thank you.

1 MR. MADERA: J-r.

2 MR. EVANS: Okay.

3 MR. MADERA: And to my right, I have my attorney, Eoin  
4 Beirne, representing me.

5 MR. EVANS: Okay. And, Mr. Beirne, can you go ahead and  
6 introduce yourself with the spelling or your name and your  
7 practice.

8 MR. BEIRNE: Eoin Beirne, E-o-i-n, B-e-i-r-n-e, of the Mintz  
9 Levin firm in Boston for Mr. Madera.

10 MR. EVANS: Thank you.

11 Now I'd like to go around the room, and have other  
12 participants introduce themselves with the spelling of their name  
13 and their affiliation of their agency or firm.

14 MR. WALLACE: Richard Wallace, R-i-c-h-a-r-d, W-a-l-l-a-c-e.  
15 I'm the Director of the Pipeline Safety Division for the  
16 Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities.

17 MR. NELSON: David Nelson, D-a-v-i-d, N-e-l-s-o-n, Operations  
18 Manager, Columbia Gas.

19 INTERVIEW OF JOSE L. MADERA, JR.

20 BY MR. EVANS:

21 Q. Okay. Thank you, Jose, for coming in today. Appreciate it.  
22 It's -- you know, we're all about safety, and having people agree  
23 to interview with us, it's all about supporting that goal we have.

24 Before we begin, I'd like to get some -- into the real  
25 questions, I'd like to get some background information on you.

1 Just the firms you've worked with, and who you're working with  
2 right now, and what your job title is. Can we start with that?

3 A. Yeah. Prior to Feeney Brothers, I worked for All Drain  
4 Services out of Dracut, Mass. I currently work for Feeney  
5 Brothers Utilities, Excavation Services. And prior to All Drain  
6 Services, I worked for Drain King, which is another sewer and  
7 drain company.

8 Q. Okay. Can you go ahead and spell the Feeney Brother -- the  
9 names of those companies for us?

10 A. Okay. Feeney Brothers, F-e-e-n-e-y, B-r-o-s, U-t-i-l-i-t-y,  
11 S-e-r-v-i-c-e-s.

12 Q. Okay. And the previous firm you worked for?

13 A. All Drain Services is A-l-l, D-r-a-i-n, S-e-r-v-i-c-e-s.

14 Q. And can we go back as far as when you started in this kind of  
15 work, what year was that?

16 A. I started doing utilities for sewer and drain 2005, and then  
17 I transitioned to gas work 2017.

18 Q. And that whole time you were in --

19 A. Feeney Brothers.

20 Q. The whole time you've been at Feeney Brothers?

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. But at one time you worked in sewer and drain, then you  
23 transitioned to gas?

24 A. Correct.



1 Q. Okay. Make sure I had that. And what type of equipment do  
2 you -- do you operate equipment?

3 A. I do, but I don't operate for Feeney. I'm a laborer.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. I do have my hoisting engineer license, 2A/1C.

6 Q. I'm sorry. Can you repeat that?

7 A. I do have the hoisting engineer license, 2A/1C.

8 Q. Okay. Your history of working with gas, can you kind of go  
9 into the different kind of gas projects you've done? I mean, have  
10 you done more industrial or more home? Where -- what have you  
11 done more of?

12 A. I've done more industrial, setting main lines, and then after  
13 putting the main in, tying in the services to each home  
14 individually or business, whatever was on the street that I worked  
15 on.

16 Q. Okay. So in your work, and I want to kind of go deep back in  
17 -- this -- the answers to this question I don't care if you're  
18 kind of off a little bit, but just as best you can recall for this  
19 particular topic. When you are working, what type of individuals  
20 from -- or what job position type people would you have, would you  
21 see on your jobs that work for, you know, different agencies,  
22 other utilities? Can you kind of give us a --

23 A. Usually on the jobsite we have our five-man crew, which  
24 consists of a foreman, two laborers, an operator and a truck  
25 driver. And then we have an inspector from the gas company, and

1 then we have, whether one or two, police details depending on how  
2 big the road we're working on and how much manpower we need to  
3 direct traffic.

4 Q. Okay. So is this the standard crew when you go out?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. So no matter job you're doing in the world of gas, you're --  
7 you'll have two laborers, truck driver?

8 A. Well, depending on the job, I guess, description, depending,  
9 some jobs might call for two crews. I've never been in the  
10 situation where we worked with two crews. I've work with another  
11 crew probably, you know, halfway down the street on the same  
12 street who was probably doing the service at the same time.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. But other than that, never worked more than a five-man crew.

15 Q. Okay. When you are going to -- let's just say you're going  
16 to break ground, right, what paperwork do you have in your hand  
17 that says I'm good to go to break ground?

18 A. Usually we get briefed prior to, at the end of the crew truck  
19 by our foreman, and he tells us what job we have ahead of us for  
20 the day, and we check the markings usually prior to us digging  
21 anything. Dig Safe comes out, marks everything. Gas company also  
22 sometimes has someone out. And usually once we know where the  
23 markings are, just the asphalt is taken up, and pretty much it's  
24 hand dug until we locate what we're looking for, and then pretty

1 much kind of try to set up and dig around it versus on it for  
2 safety purposes.

3 Q. Have you been involved with a hit where gas was released?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Oh. Okay. Have you had an occasion in your history for all  
6 these years doing gas work, have you had a stop work order by  
7 someone saying you have to stop because something is not right  
8 or --

9 A. No.

10 Q. No. No any kind of like a infraction written up by --

11 A. No.

12 Q. -- some party or nothing like that?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Have you seen anybody get written up?

15 A. No, I haven't. But I'm pretty sure there has been lines that  
16 have been ripped in the past, but I had no part of it, but I've  
17 never personally been written up. Never been on a crew that has  
18 been written up either.

19 Q. Any of your peers that you know have been, you know, your  
20 buddies?

21 A. Not that I know of.

22 Q. Okay. Have you ever heard of anyone getting a stop work on  
23 them by -- for something that was going, not quite going right,  
24 and they said, hey, stop, we're going to stop this --

25 A. No.

1 Q. -- right now?

2 A. No.

3 Q. Okay. Do you have authority to stop work?

4 A. Yes, I do.

5 Q. Okay. And what would be an occasion when you might stop  
6 work?

7 A. If the operator's digging, he's digging too close to the a  
8 line, if a T's coming off a main that we don't know was there, and  
9 sometimes -- you know, it's our job watching the operator as he  
10 digs. If we see anything, we have the right to stop digging,  
11 stop, you know, all operations for safety. And, you know, anyone  
12 in the crew has the authority to stop a job right away. We all  
13 have, we all have that authority.

14 Q. Have you done that in your own career?

15 A. While digging, you know, if a line is exposed that we didn't  
16 know was there, sometimes if we're digging and there's a water  
17 line that wasn't -- is marked, but sometimes the markings are off,  
18 but and we see it before an accident occurs, stop, let me check  
19 there. You see some warning tape sometimes. Usually that will  
20 stop -- warning tape, let me check something's there. So that's -  
21 -- we've had, I've had several times to just say hold on, give me  
22 a second; let me double check, make sure nothing is there.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. And that's pretty much why I probably have the success of no  
25 accidents, thank God.

1 Q. Now let's talk about the 70 homes. In your career have you  
2 worked in that neighborhood for, you know, bunch of times in your  
3 career?

4 A. I've been a resident of Lawrence for 27 years. I actually  
5 personally was affected by it. I live in the South Lawrence area.  
6 My home is on high pressure, so we have a regulator, and my son is  
7 also an employee of Feeney Brothers, who is a pipefitter. So he  
8 was actually home, arriving home when all the chaos was going on.  
9 And I had him -- you know, just told him shut the meter, the gas  
10 meter, and just make sure the neighbors are safe.

11 But I've lived in Lawrence since 1991, and I actually run a  
12 boxing program here also for the past 9 years. So I'm very in the  
13 community, so to speak.

14 Q. Okay. So but as far as that neighborhood that you -- you  
15 live near that, I guess in the neighborhood, right?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. But you're on a high pressure system. Okay. Have you done a  
18 lot of work?

19 A. Predominantly since I started with Bill Deroche crew, my  
20 foreman, that's what we've been doing all summer, anywhere between  
21 13 and 15 cut-off and tie-ins, aided in.

22 Q. In the immediate area of the where the explosions occurred?

23 A. Well, pretty much in the South Lawrence area.

24 Q. And South Lawrence includes the whole neighborhood?

25 A. The area we was working, yes.

1 Q. Okay. Good. So when you are doing something like excavating  
2 for them to cut into a line or restore a line, pull one out, put  
3 one in, who do you see on the scene from Columbia?

4 A. The inspector. Usually the inspector is there, and our five-  
5 man crew. Sometimes another inspector will pass by, but I don't  
6 know if it's just to discuss something, but usually it's one  
7 inspector from the gas company.

8 Q. Does that inspector share anything? Does he show you a  
9 drawing or does he show you a picture? Does he show you --

10 A. He usually gives our foreman a packet of the job description  
11 we're to perform, and it has drawings, blueprints of what type,  
12 what cut, and it also has a step-by-step procedure on how to put  
13 the bags in, you know, set up the setup for the cut off and the  
14 ~~time~~ <sup>tie in</sup> <sup>on</sup>, the step-by-step procedure.

15 Q. Okay. And you always follow by the numbers? Are they --

16 A. Oh, absolutely. Our foreman, Bill Deroche, is we call him by  
17 the book Billy because he is very -- he runs the straight <sup>edge</sup> <sup>edge</sup> ledge.  
18 No shortcuts with that guy.

19 Q. His nickname is ~~Billy~~ <sup>By the book Billy</sup> <sup>edge</sup>.

20 A. By the Book Billy.

21 Q. By the Book Billy. Glad to hear that. You just spoke well  
22 of the company. Okay. So you follow that all the way down?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Okay. So let's just say that he -- you have a paint by  
25 numbers you have to use, right, and you're going to do all these

1 steps, and something doesn't work quite right, and he says, wait a  
2 minute, we can't, we can't do, we can't go from step five to step  
3 six because there's something, there's a problem. What would  
4 happen then?

5 A. I think his immediate response would be to notify the  
6 inspector onsite, which is usually standing there with us anyway.

7 Q. Okay. Have you ever had an occasion when you're excavating  
8 and there was no inspector around anywhere?

9 A. No.

10 Q. Never?

11 A. Usually we take breaks together, you know, take our 15-  
12 minute, our lunch break, and that's pretty much. We pretty much  
13 stay as a group. Because of the severity of we're dealing with  
14 live gas. And we never want to leave the hole unattended. So,  
15 you know, people could drive in the hole, people will walk in the  
16 hole sometimes, you know, pedestrians ignore safety barriers, and  
17 we go, where are you going?

18 So but other than that we usually do everything as a group  
19 usually. The only time probably when the truck driver leaves to  
20 go get hardtop or some gravel that it will be one guy less or  
21 something or, you know, someone has to go get materials for the  
22 job itself. Usually we're stuck together.

23 Q. Okay. So in your career of doing this kind of work, has the  
24 inspector ever, you know, not stopped what you were doing, but he

1 had to kind of say we can't do it this way, I'm going to go call  
2 the office and get some guidance on this or anything like that?

3 A. My past experience, no. Usually, you know, prior to the  
4 situation the other day we haven't had any incidents of, you know,  
5 pause, give me a second, let me make sure. It's pretty much all  
6 been -- it's been all cut clean pretty much with the book, you  
7 know, the pamphlet we get prior to doing the job. We have  
8 diagrams. We have step-by-step procedure. Whatever needs -- for  
9 time preferences, you know, on the cooking and the cooling of the  
10 pipe or the bags itself, you know, everything is on a time and  
11 step pretty much.

12 Q. So to your -- to the best of your knowledge when you get one  
13 of these packages it's gone through -- Mr. Bill there goes through  
14 and says, okay, we're going to do it by the numbers, and that's  
15 it.

16 A. Pretty much.

17 Q. Not detract from the numbers.

18 A. No, yeah, he's a step-by-step. To see -- I'll give you an  
19 example. If he wants 4 inches of asphalt, and we put a half-inch  
20 of gravel to high, we're scraping that half inch out. He's that  
21 by the book.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. He's had it, done it quite a few times. That's too high.  
24 Get a half inch out. He likes to be precise in what he does  
25 pretty much.



1 Q. What about wires that you, you know, when you excavate and  
2 sometimes you see the control sensing wires that they get tied  
3 into a regulator, and they go and get tied into a pipe?

4 A. I've never seen regulator wires. I've seen just trace wire,  
5 and then I've also see wire like for electric conduit. Sometimes  
6 they have a duct bank, you know, for the street lights. That's  
7 the only wire. But I've never seen a sensor wire. I've never  
8 worked with a sensor wire.

9 Q. When you're getting close to a regulator, I mean, are you,  
10 you know, how much of your work is hand digging versus mechanized?

11 A. I've never worked near a regulator that I know of, to be  
12 honest. Pretty much everything was, like, pretty much the last 13  
13 to 15 times we did was peel the ~~hats~~ <sup>not top off</sup> off. We know the pipe's in  
14 this area. Dig down, locate it, figure out the depth, how much  
15 clearance we have before we have to hand dig the rest, and usually  
16 it's been all the same process. Usually there's a stub in the  
17 ~~hole~~ <sup>hole</sup> for the main, and a section was cutting out and the stub was  
18 tied into the -- to the old, and that's pretty much what I've  
19 experienced.

20 Q. So have you ever had an occasion when, you know, By the Book  
21 Billy, he was not there, and you had somebody else?

22 A. Only one time one day, and it was just backfilling, and that  
23 was it.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. It was just backfilling. No pipe work was done.

1 Q. So all of the work that you do, you do as this team.

2 A. Usually a two or three-leg process, depending on the size of  
3 the pipe. You know, 8 inches is harder to maneuver around than 4  
4 inch. And depending how big the tie-in is. Sometimes it's longer  
5 footage, probably about 4 or 5 feet, not much too longer, but it's  
6 pretty much all the same.

7 Q. Okay. So when you're doing your work do you ever feel  
8 unsafe?

9 A. Not really. But after experiencing what I experienced, it  
10 spun me around in the sense of this really happens. I've never  
11 heard of a chaotic situation like -- I've heard of probably a  
12 single house and, you know, certain around the country and stuff.  
13 But I was, like, wow, what's going on?

14 Q. Right. But I mean in all the time you've been doing your  
15 work, you haven't had this uneasy feeling about working around  
16 gas? You're comfortable with it?


17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. You felt safe and all that type of thing?

19 A. Yeah. I've never had that scary situation, and, you know,  
20 obviously you don't think it will happen to you until it actually  
21 happens to you. I know it was -- it's a possibility it can, you  
22 know, I'm working with live gas, anything can happen any given  
23 second. So that's why pretty much most of the time I'm alert. I  
24 try to stay alert with even hand digging next to the pipes  
25 sometimes, sometimes depending on the condition of the pipe, you

1 know, you don't want to even touch the pipe. But other than that,  
2 I've been confident. I've been confident with the crew that I  
3 work with. We bond together after work for so long. And just  
4 working with the company itself, try to make each other feel safe,  
5 you know.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Like when the situation occurred, you know, your natural  
8 reaction is to run, but I'm in the hole with my other co-worker  
9 and, obviously, we're going to have each other's back. I asked  
10 him if he was okay. He asked me the same. We're fine. And after  
11 that it was, you know, we did what we did to contain and ~~excavate~~ <sup>evacuate</sup>   
12 and stuff like that.

13 Q. Okay. So now I have some background on what you do, and your  
14 -- kind of like your boss and all that. To go back from the day  
15 of the accident, and from the time you work up from your best  
16 recall, I'm going to go through that whole day.

17 A. Okay.

18 Q. So let's go there.

19 A. So I woke up 6 a.m., normal routine. Washed up, got dressed,  
20 left my house quarter of 7, and I arrived at the job site 10 of 7.  
21 I live about 5 minutes away. And the rest of the crew was  
22 arriving as I was arriving. Billy was already there. And once we  
23 were all there, we took all the road blockage equipment cones, you  
24 know, safety tape, et cetera, we just took it out to the back of

1 the truck because we couldn't set up because our police detail was  
2 arriving an hour late.

3 So once he arrived at 8 o'clock, I assisted the rest of the  
4 crew in blocking off the road, setting up detour signs and safety  
5 perimeters with the cones and the sidewalk signs. And before we  
6 pulled any plates, my foreman, Billy, asked me if I can go to  
7 Columbia Gas to pick up some materials for the job we were doing,  
8 which consisted of Servi-Seals, Wax-Tape, Wax-Primer, plugs, a  
9 fusion tee, and a stack fitting, and pipe dope, I think. Oh, and  
10 soap, bubble, safety soap for the bubbles, for leaks, leak test.

11  
12 And then after that -- so I left probably roughly 8:10, 8  
13 o'clock, and took off to Columbia, got my supplies, and I probably  
14 got back to the jobsite probably quarter to 9, 10 minutes to 9.  
15 And then we have coffee break. The <sup>officer</sup> ~~office~~ had provided us with  
16 coffee.

17 So once we had the coffee, there was -- we already had the  
18 equipment out pretty much. The guys kept taking the rest of the  
19 equipment out prior to me arriving. I put my fire suit on to  
20 assist my laborer, lead laborer, and he started to set up his  
21 gauges. And once the gauges were set up and, you know, we had a  
22 visual of all the gauges, what pressure was on them, which was 9½  
23 inches, and he set up his bypass. And once the bypass was set up,  
24 he set up for the bags. And then once the bags were set up, they  
25 dropped the bags. As this -- during this whole process, we're

1 observing pressure gauges, all three gauges, one being on stub,  
2 and then two on -- one on each end of the cast iron.

3       Once the bags were settled, the bag pressure didn't drop, the  
4 gas pressure didn't drop or rise, then proceeded to cut off the  
5 section of the main. And once that was cut, he capped off the  
6 dead side, which was toward the south union side. He capped it  
7 off. Pressure gauges, everything still fine. Then dry fitted the  
8 tie-in piece. And once it was dry fitted, and it was the right  
9 measurements, he fused on -- cut off -- well, cut off the gas to  
10 the plastic, then cut, and then fused the plastic in, and just had  
11 the coupling for to attach to the cast. Wasn't fastened because  
12 you have to allow the fusion to cool off temperature, and make  
13 sure that's cured correctly.

14       And once that was -- that had its cool off time, which is  
15 about 45 minutes in total, have a clamp, in which you release the  
16 clamp, let it cool down more. Tied in the mechanical coupling.  
17 The gauges are still fine. Shut off the bypass. Took off the  
18 plastic 2-inch to the bypass. Both valves were shut. That's each  
19 bypass that's connected to a valve in a tee that goes into the  
20 main. Shut the valves, took the plastic off. Gauges are still  
21 fine. Waited about 15, 20 minutes. Nothing changed. Proceeded  
22 to take off the gauges.

23       Everything seemed fine. And once he was unscrewing the tee  
24 to the bypass, when he got to the last thread and was supposed to  
25 plug it, it was just blown out of his hand. And that's when we

1 noticed, like, this isn't low pressure, like, what just happened?  
2 Our inspector and our foreman immediately was, like, cover it. A  
3 natural reaction. We just -- we footed it because it was just a  
4 2-inch plug that was escaping from the Servi-Seal; put a foot on  
5 it. And our biggest concern was to contain it. We took the  
6 bypass, which has a valve on it, a shutoff valve on it. We opened  
7 the valve. We threaded it back into the Servi-Seal, and then we  
8 was able to shut the valve and contain the gas from dispersing  
9 into the air.

10 And then after that, you know, inspector Rich ~~Fadad~~ <sup>Zedard</sup> (ph.), he  
11 contacted immediately Columbia and a bunch of other supervisors  
12 and inspectors were dispatched to the scene. And a gentleman by  
13 the name of Rob called for a briefing, and we were all assigned  
14 pretty much a critical valve in the area which, you know, he sent  
15 a group of two guys to shut off the valve to pretty much stop the  
16 flow of the gas in the immediate area.

17 And once we did that, I assisted in evacuating homes pretty  
18 much in the immediate area. Because we didn't know exactly where  
19 everything was going on, but we can see that with all the first  
20 responders just driving frantic and just pedestrians not knowing  
21 where to drive because it was so much congestion. It was actually  
22 just about rush-hour. Everybody is getting out of school.  
23 Everybody is getting home from work. So it was a lot of  
24 congestion in the traffic, and it was very hard for emergency  
25 responders to get to certain destinations. And we was also being

1 assisted by other cities and towns. They don't know the streets  
2 as well as the local departments do. So it was very chaotic.

3 And then after that, I assisted. And then around, I would  
4 say 7, 7:30, we were transported to Columbia, and we were then  
5 interviewed there, and protocol, all, you know, interviewed, and  
6 pretty much breathalyzer and drug screened. And stood there to  
7 about 2:30 in the morning. And I personally was affected by the  
8 situation because I live in the South Lawrence area, and I had no  
9 gas and no power. So I have a family of six, four children, me  
10 and my wife. So we were all displaced, and we stay at our father-  
11 in-law's house.

12 And after the all the looting started, I went back to my  
13 house because I had three dogs there. So I just go home to the  
14 dogs. But was a long day, very long. Left my house quarter to 7,  
15 and arrived -- well, I didn't get home, but I got to my in-laws  
16 about quarter past 3. So it was --

17 Q. In the morning?

18 A. In the morning, yeah. So it was a very long day. But it was  
19 very chaotic, but as a group of the people that are on scene, I  
20 think we held it together in the sense of we didn't panic in the  
21 sense of we was trying to contain the situation. But people they  
22 don't know what's going on as pedestrians. I mean, they're going  
23 by rumors. They was kind of, you know, frantic -- oh, fire there,  
24 the fire there.

1 But our number one reaction to do once the situation occurred  
2 -- and actually prior to us -- prior to the tee blowing off the  
3 main, there was already fires going on, I'd say 15, 20 minutes  
4 prior to before we actually knew what was going on. We realized  
5 what was going on once the tee blew off, but we didn't know why  
6 firefighters were flying by us 15, 20 minutes prior to us. And  
7 that's when that situation occurred, and that's when we knew that  
8 wasn't ~~level~~ <sup>low</sup> pressure anymore. It was all low, you know, it was  
9 all low pressure that we was working on; so it was like that's not  
10 low pressure. Because when he took the gauge off, he was able to  
11 put his hand over it, and put the plug on. There was no putting  
12 the plug on once the tee came off.

13 Q. Okay. Thank you for that. Your recall is excellent, by the  
14 way. I mean, I can tell that everything you said was --

15 A. It kind of --

16 Q. -- clear in your mind, embedded.

17 A. It's not as bad but, you know, because thank God, you know,  
18 the fatalities and everything was, but it was kind of a reminder  
19 of 9/11, which just happened 2 days ago, and we all had a reminder  
20 of the -- seeing the situation with the panic and the fire, you  
21 know, the first responders. You know, it was, like, this is  
22 crazy. People yelling. We were trying to direct traffic. First  
23 responders -- I'm not a police; I don't do police detailing work.  
24 I really don't know how to direct traffic, but I did what I can  
25 do. And there was actually a lot of elderly people who lived on



1 the street. So I pretty much bang on every door and window just,  
2 you know -- and people, like, I'm not leaving my house. I'm like,  
3 if you smell gas, you need to get out. This is serious.

4 But I've never been in a situation like that. Thank God I've  
5 never had no prior accidents with a pipe bursting or any of that.  
6 The pipe didn't burst; it was just the tee, the pressure just blew  
7 the tee off of the pipe. It never erupted and we was able to  
8 contain it. And was smart thinking, we put the valve back on, ~~it~~ <sup>we</sup>  
9 shut ~~off~~ <sup>we</sup> we was able to, you know, get the tee back on with the  
10 valve and shut it off with the valve, with the valve that it had  
11 on it. And that's used for the setup of the bypass, so -- which  
12 was just quick thinking, contain it.

13 It was very scary though. I was -- I'm still a little shook  
14 up about it in the sense of, wow, you know. It could have been  
15 totally different. I could have died or, you know, God forbid, my  
16 family, anybody.

17 Q. Right.

18 A. It was definitely -- it was a lot personal for me being that  
19 I lived in the area. So I was affected personally by it, you  
20 know, so.

21 Q. Right.

22 A. I was on both sides of it. I'm working with gas, and then I  
23 was also -- I don't consider it a victim, but I was affected by  
24 it.

25 Q. Right.

1 A. My neighborhood that's a community itself too.

2 Q. Okay. I need go to -- one thing that I failed to ask you,  
3 and I didn't hear it in your explanation. The address you were at  
4 when this occurred with the tee and all that, what address was  
5 that?

6 A. We was on the intersection of Salem Street and South Union  
7 Street. One the side of the Common, South Common Park.

8 Q. Intersection of Lexington?

9 A. Salem.

10 Q. Salem.

11 A. And South Union Street.

12 Q. Salem and South Union. And how far is that from where the  
13 homes were exploding? Block away? Mile away?

14 A. Well, I don't know exactly what -- <sup>homes</sup> ~~where~~ <sup>(in)</sup> was the first one  
15 that was erupted. I say probably at the closest one was -- to us  
16 was on Salem Street. The next street over the house didn't  
17 totally burn. I think just the furnace burned, and they was able  
18 to contain it. And then I can see smoke coming from the North  
19 Andover area, which is on Mass Ave. And we could see smoke coming  
20 down from Winthrop Ave, which has a six-way intersection.

21 Q. Right.

22 A. You can see smoke. You can smell it. It wasn't a black  
23 smoke. It was more of a yellow smoke.

1 Q. Okay. So you told us that you're hearing emergency vehicles  
2 for 15 minutes, and then all of a sudden you have this issue with  
3 your tee, right. During that 15 minutes did you hear explosions?

4 A. I didn't hear any explosions. Just <sup>the</sup> more you see <sup>more</sup> the -- we  
5 noticed <sup>that</sup> the houses are burning because you can see the yellow  
6 smoke coming out of the chimney stack.

7 Q. Right.

8 A. So and it wasn't just natural smoke where you're burning wood  
9 in the wood stove.

10 Q. Right.

11 A. It was dark orange and very orangey. And the first one --  
12 most of the firefighters first, I think, were going past us on  
13 Salem Street towards Mass Ave. And from my understanding you have  
14 Shawsheen Terrace, and two, actually two streets over from Salem.  
15 So we're on Salem. We got Bailey and then Abbott Street. On  
16 Abbott Street there was a fire also, and we can see the smoke and  
17 smell that.

18 Q. Okay. In all of your experience you've never experienced a  
19 situation where you essentially tie into a high pressure main  
20 thinking it was a low pressure main?

21 A. No, never.

22 Q. Never happened?

23 A. Never.

24 Q. Okay. <sup>where</sup> what was the -- <sup>the</sup> ~~was the~~ inspector there with you when  
25 all of this was going on?

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. Was he -- did he say anything?

3 A. He was, like, you know, like, what's going on? And he  
4 immediately was on the phone. I'm not sure who he was calling.  
5 And he was, like, even, you know, my foreman, who has been with  
6 the company, I don't know, 20 plus years, he was, like, he's never  
7 seen something like that. And we was, like, what's going on?  
8 From put your hand over and plug it to -- can't get your plug on  
9 not even your hand. It was very unexpectedly. You try to feel  
10 like you're prepared for every situation, but I felt with that  
11 situation happening, like, you never know when it's going to  
12 happen. You think I'm ready, you know. We're always briefed  
13 about safety. We have -- always having company safety meetings  
14 just to remind us. We got a daily dig every morning from our  
15 company, you know, reminding us of safety. And now it's  
16 happening. What do you do? How do you react? It was more of a  
17 do I freeze? Do I run? Do I assist? And I have that good heart,  
18 and I've pretty much always tried to aid and assist, especially in  
19 a situation like that. I've had neighbors' houses burn, which I  
20 assisted. But this was totally different. Off guard I can say.

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. It's the end of the day. Everything is pretty much cleaned  
23 up. Our work area is cleaned up. We're just breaking down. We  
24 wasn't going to backfill because it was already the end of the  
25 day. So we was, like, all right, tomorrow we come, you know, we

1 do it, like I said, we do it in usually 2 or 3 days. Locate.  
2 Everything's clean. We prep our pieces. We test every, you know,  
3 every piece we make. Everything is air tested. Bypass is air  
4 tested. And once we do our tie-in we usually let it settle.  
5 Make sure, you know, check for leaks. Nothing is leaking. All  
6 right, cool. Tomorrow we'll come in, we'll backfill it.  
7 Depending how big the hole is. Sometimes the trench is 20 feet, 8  
8 feet wide, you know, 4-1/2 feet deep. So it's a lot of compacting  
9 and Wax-Taping, and --

10 Q. Right.

11 A. -- those extra measures we put prior to backfilling. Wax-  
12 Taping all the joints, everything we touch, make sure the tracer  
13 wire is connected. We have our ~~markables~~ <sup>marker balls</sup> in places, our warning <sup>Jim</sup>  
14 tape for if the next person has to dig in the immediate area  
15 there's warning tape. And then everything is compacted,  
16 asphalted. That's pretty much how it goes. It's been that way  
17 since I started.

18 Q. Okay. So do you know if anyone took any photographs of the  
19 open ditch?

20 A. Usually Billy does. I'm pretty sure he did. Once we  
21 complete, he usually with the iPad that he uses every day to keep  
22 all his notes and stuff, he usually takes a picture. And if I'm  
23 not wrong, he did take a picture.

24 Q. Okay.

1 A. Yeah. He takes a picture of everything. Good to have a  
2 visual.

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. If it's buried, you can try to visualize it. At least you  
5 have a picture better to tell you exactly where to do that.  
6 Usually markings, and then that's another thing. Once we finish  
7 and we backfill, we mark off everything that was done.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. If it's an end cap or, you know, everything. The pressure is  
10 always put on, the pressure of the line, the size of the line. So  
11 there's no confusion whether it's a 4 or an 8-inch.

12 Q. Okay. So what is -- how do you spell Billy's last name  
13 again?

14 A. Deroche. D-e-r-o-s-c -- no -- c-h-e.

15 Q. C-h-e?

16 A. Yeah.

17 MR. EVANS: Okay. We'll definitely want to talk to him. Are  
18 you appearing for Billy?

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

20 MR. EVANS: Okay. Yeah, we'll -- is he scheduled already or  
21 no?

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You talking about -- I believe he's  
23 scheduled for tomorrow morning.

24 MR. EVANS: Okay. Good.

25 BY MR. EVANS:

1 Q. So the work instruction package that you were using that day,  
2 right, was there anything with regard to, you know, previous to  
3 this event was there any discussions about anything at all to do  
4 with the work package?

5 A. Not at all.

6 Q. Some routine stuff?

7 A. I thought it was out last tie-in, to be honest.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. I wasn't -- I'm not sure. It was nothing out of the --  
10 different that he explained to us or that I read on the packet  
11 myself. I didn't see anything different. I didn't see any  
12 abnormal operating conditions at all. The pipe before even being  
13 touched was intact. It had marks on them, all the bells and  
14 marks. There was no leaks on the pipe. And the plastic that was  
15 in there was fairly new. So I never in my day, like, thought  
16 something like that would occur.

17 Q. Okay. So what about was there any -- I know in your work you  
18 guys are probably so used to smelling mercaptan in the gas,  
19 natural gas. Was there any unusual level of natural gas before  
20 this happened that you had?

21 A. No.

22 Q. Nothing like that?

23 A. The first thing we did was put the meters in, and --

24 Q. No alarm?

25 A. -- the gauges.

CGI (P) (Q) (R) (S) (T) (U) (V) (W) (X) (Y) (Z)

1 Q. Gauges.

2 A. The gauges, everything was held at 9½. Nothing dropped,  
3 nothing went out.

4 MR. EVANS: Okay. That's all from me right now.

5 MR. WALLACE: Are you all set? You -- I'm sorry. Richard  
6 Wallace speaking.

7 BY MR. WALLACE:

8 Q. Do you need to take a break or --

9 A. No. I'm all set.

10 Q. Okay. I do have a few questions. You said you went to work  
11 for Feeney in 2016?

12 A. '17.

13 Q. '17. I'm sorry. '17. What kind of training did you get at  
14 that time?

15 A. Lot of videos, couple -- I did -- took eight tests, eight  
16 written tests, and pretty much I ~~was~~ <sup>have</sup> -- my basic qualifications as  
17 a -- for a laborer. All I pretty much do is assist the lead  
18 laborer passing tools, carrying the pipe in the hole, out the  
19 hole, cleaning the pipe, hand digging. And my job pretty much is  
20 while he's doing all the tapping, drilling, and cutting, I'm  
21 observing gauges. Whatever tools need to be passed or soap  
22 tested, I'm there kind of pretty much. And that's <sup>all</sup> -- I did that,  
23 I did the -- took week training, 40-hour training, and I took my  
24 written tests, passed them all, and then I started off with a  
25 scattered service gentleman. I forget his name was Chris. I



1 don't know his -- remember his last name. I did a couple  
2 scattered services with him, and then I was put on a permanent  
3 crew in the West Newton area. And the commute was taking a toll  
4 on me from Lawrence every day so I had to leave extra early, get  
5 home late.


6 So this year I transferred to Lawrence area, and I started up  
7 here in April. I felt with Billy I've learned the most, being my  
8 prior foreman and the other guys that I've, you know, I usually  
9 work on Saturdays. I volunteer to work every Saturday. So I go  
10 where they need me, and everybody pretty much does the same, but  
11 Billy is more of a teacher. Tells you what you're doing, and why  
12 you're doing it. He explains it more. He's always been very -- a  
13 lot of people sometimes, you know, they worked with Billy in the  
14 past, say I need to go on a different crew because he's so  
15 tedious. Which is fine with me. I look at it as a learning  
16 experience more.

17 My goal is to be a foreman someday. Soon hopefully, because  
18 I am getting <sup>older</sup> -- I'm not young; 43. But I have the confidence, and  
19 I feel with <sup>time</sup> -- I'd like to, I think, with hands-on experience I  
20 learn more, but I -- I'm trying to absorb everything I can now to  
21 get me to where I want to be as a foreman. And every day is a  
22 learning experience for me. And I think that it was nothing out  
23 of the ordinary that we did. It was different than I've done in  
24 the past. So I didn't feel unsafe, but I thought my training that  
25 I've learned, obviously it did help on the situation where, you

1 know, how we contained. We helped evacuate, and we aided and  
2 assisted everything and everyone around us. I felt I definitely  
3 had enough training to perform the tasks at hand.

4 Q. Thank you. You mentioned before abnormal operating  
5 conditions. As a laborer, did you get any kind of training for  
6 what they also call AOC's.

7 A. Yes. We watch videos on abnormal operating conditions.  
8 Sometimes it could be weather. It can be infrastructure in the  
9 ground. Sometimes the duct banks, sewer pipes. And depending,  
10 you know, the ground's frozen; we can't dig when it's cold. And  
11 also just more the abnormal operating conditions would be more of  
12 a safety hazard so to speak. If it's, like, you know, no cell  
13 phones in the hole, you know, a spark. But other than that, we  
14 ground everything.

15 That's another thing. So everything is grounded always for   
16 ~~as~~ static. So I didn't feel it was anything, you know, there was  
17 no weather abnormal, you know. It was nice out, sunny out. So  
18 that wasn't a factor. There were no other utilities in the  
19 immediate area where we was working on that were going to be in  
20 the way or tampered with. So I didn't think of any that could  
21 possibly be any abnormal. Because knowing that I work with gas, I  
22 want to live to go home too. So I don't think that I would put  
23 myself never mind someone else in that position to work or want to  
24 work in an abnormal operating.

1           Sometimes we get a little drizzle, and I'll joke around, and  
2 say ain't this a abnormal operating condition? We can't fuse no  
3 pipes today. Let's go home. Just want to go home. But, you  
4 know, it's a joke, but it has some meaning behind it. But if  
5 that's the situation, we definitely won't do any pipe in that sort  
6 of environment. But so that's how I kind of refresh myself, you  
7 know, with a joke sometime it refreshes us that it's serious, be  
8 alert. Any given second things can go the wrong way.

9           So, and I feel that we reacted well as a team, and everybody  
10 around us in the immediate, you know, we can only do so much at  
11 the end of the day. Just it was chaotic. So, you know, but I  
12 think the response overall we reacted well, and that comes from  
13 training. I think if I didn't have any training, yeah, I would  
14 have probably got out the hole and ran down the street, like F  
15 this, I'm out of here. But I felt confidence.

16           Some people they smell gas, oh, my God. No, no. Sometimes,  
17 you know, when you purge a line, neighbors come out, I smell gas.  
18 Yeah, yeah, that's all right. We just purged the line. Oh, okay.  
19 It gives them some sort of comfort. But if I <sup>didn't know</sup> I would feel the  
20 same way if I never worked with gas. After working with it, and  
21 dealing with it, you know, there's sometimes when I walk by  
22 somewhere and I'll be, like, I smell gas now. Because now I'm  
23 working with it. So soon as I smell it, I smell gas here, and  
24 it's part of me now. It's part of my daily, my daily living

1 pretty much. I work pretty much 6 days a week. So it's like  
2 human nature to me. So --

3 Q. You mentioned that there was a bypass.

4 A. Um-hmm.

5 Q. And the bypass was tied in from one main to the other main?

6 A. No. It's on the same main. So this is the main. So you  
7 have to cut out a section because this -- so this is the main, and  
8 this is the main here, and this is the stub. So in order to tie  
9 this pipe into this pipe, we cut off a section -- we cut off my  
10 (indiscernible) section. Now we 90 it over and 90 it, and tie it  
11 to this pipe. So there's a gauge at this end, this end, and a  
12 gauge on the plastic, on the tee. So you have a gauge here and a  
13 gauge here. And in between the gauges is your bypass.

14 Q. And you would -- so you were tying in the plastic to the --

15 A. Cast.

16 Q. -- to the cast iron?

17 A. Correct.

18 Q. And there was a gauge on the plastic?

19 A. On the plastic there's a gauge off of fuse tee. Comes out  
20 with a half-inch, no. It's a three-quarter-inch or one-inch, and  
21 it has a top on it, and on the top screw in the gauge, pressure  
22 gauge. And you have the two, one on each end of the main that we  
23 -- and then actually on the bags itself that have gauges, those  
24 gauges are for the pressure on the bag, not for the pressure of  
25 the gas.

1 Q. So you mentioned also that you were watching the gauges?

2 A. Yeah. As my co-workers either cutting or tapping. Once he  
3 drops the bags in, we start watching, making sure. Because the  
4 pressure, the pressure is the same once you put the bags in it  
5 pretty much blocks the main, and it's just running over the  
6 bypass. So once the bags are in, you want to make sure your  
7 gauges don't drop. It will pretty much say the gas isn't flowing  
8 through the bypass.

9 Q. Did you notice anything abnormal --

10 A. Not at all.

11 Q. -- about the gauges?

12 A. Not at all.

13 Q. At any point in time?

14 A. No.

15 Q. What about when the fitting came apart, the elbow?

16 A. The fitting came apart. That -- it was obvious to us in the  
17 hole and for the inspector and the foreman standing there it  
18 wasn't low pressure because it was screaming. And usually when  
19 there's just low pressure it's a -- it's very low compared to high  
20 pressure. The exact pressure that came out, I don't know, but I  
21 know it wasn't when we originally started working.

22 Q. Okay. So usually in a bypass you're going to have a valve  
23 somewhere to --

24 A. There's a valve on each side.

1 Q. Right. Before those valves were open, did anybody verify and  
2 document what the gauges were reading?

3 A. Yeah. The supervisor documents it, and he also prior to  
4 opening both sides of the bypass he purges out first. Because  
5 from each side, you know, because it has to be intact. The valves  
6 are closed. One valve is open, and it's purged. And then once  
7 that one is purged out, then the other side is tapped. That way  
8 there's no air pocket.

9 Q. Did they also take a reading and document what the pressure  
10 was on the plastic line?

11 A. I'm pretty sure he did, yeah. He, once he purged it out,  
12 after we shut the valve on the plastic to perform the cut for the  
13 tie-in the line is purged out the gas that's remaining in the  
14 stem, the stub that's sticking in the hole.

15 Q. Did you have any OQ training -- I'm sorry, operator  
16 qualification training, also known as OQ training, to make a  
17 determination of whether those gauges were normal or abnormal?

18 A. I'm not sure if I did any OQ specifically for gauges. But  
19 what I do know is those gauges were fairly new. They was just  
20 calibrated or recalibrated. I'm not sure. Usually, actually we  
21 got those gauges a week or two ago; 1 to 2 weeks ago, we had new  
22 gauges. They brought us out new gauges. Because we actually have  
23 auditors, like, last month or something, company-wide, and all our  
24 gauges everything was pretty much all new, everything.

25 Q. Was this the first time you have ever done a bypass tie-in?

- 1 A. No.
- 2 Q. Have you done those before?
- 3 A. Yeah, I <sup>did</sup> when I -- as long as I started with Billy that's  
4 all -- that's what I've done for the past since I want to say May,  
5 May or June.
- 6 Q. Have they all been low to low?
- 7 A. All been low to low.
- 8 Q. You've never done a low to high or --
- 9 A. Never done a high. I've never worked -- the only time I've  
10 ever worked on a high pressure line was when I was with a  
11 different foreman, and we just did ~~the~~ <sup>a service</sup> surface, which is totally  
12 different. It was on steel, and it was a half-inch line,  
13 something like that. But I've never tied in any high pressure  
14 line at all.
- 15 Q. You mentioned before that there was another gentleman there  
16 by the name of Rob?
- 17 A. Yes.
- 18 Q. Was he working for Columbia gas?
- 19 A. He works for Columbia gas, correct.
- 20 Q. You don't know his last name?
- 21 A. I don't.
- 22 Q. Could you describe him?
- 23 A. Resembles you a lot.
- 24 MR. EVANS: Oh, yeah?
- 25 MR. MADERA: Yes.

1 MR. EVANS: There you go. Go look at me.

2 BY MR. WALLACE:

3 Q. Does he wear a Red Sox cap?

4 A. I don't think he had a cap on. He had a vest on though. He  
5 has Columbia work vehicle. He arrived very fast on scene, and,  
6 you know, after when he arrived we was already evacuating. And  
7 he's, like, I need a group of people. We need to shut off some  
8 critical valves. And someone sent him the list of locations. And  
9 once I got to the location I was assigned to, I said, I'm here.  
10 I've located the critical valve gate box. And he was, like, all  
11 right.

12 And actually a Columbia guy was passing by, and ~~I~~ -- our  
13 inspector, he actually was running to the same location that I  
14 was. I drove there. He ran there. And he got there, and it was  
15 a Columbia truck passing by. We waved them down. Because the key  
16 I had originally took with me wasn't for the critical valve key.  
17 It's the plastic key. And shut it off. We recorded the time.  
18 And I called Rob, and I think a woman by the name of Veena. I  
19 called her back and said, you know, gas off as of 6:14 p.m. That  
20 was it.

21 Q. So Rob was not there when the bypass was opened up?

22 A. No. Rich was. Rich ~~Padad~~ <sup>Bedra</sup> he was there.

23 Q. When the valve initially was opened up on the bypass, what  
24 sound did it make?



1 A. A very low. Because usually when we purge it he's getting a  
2 reading, you know, after the present time, he's getting a reading  
3 on the gas and the pressure never dropped. And he usually tests  
4 it three times, if I'm not incorrect. He tests it three times,  
5 and makes sure it's 100 percent gas in the line. And once it's  
6 purged, and then the breakdown process begins. Once it's -- all  
7 the fittings are secured, everything has been tested for leaks, no  
8 leaks, then we break down the equipment.

9 Q. Was it similar to sounds that you had heard in the past --

10 A. Yeah, the normal sound.

11 Q. -- during low pressure tie-in?

12 A. Same sound as always. We didn't hear anything different.

13 Only just when they was taking off that tee, which was --

14 Q. So the pipe didn't separate until you started loosening the  
15 attachment --

16 A. The pipe --

17 Q. -- the tee?

18 A. -- never separated. There's a ~~SR-B~~ <sup>servi</sup> seal that's wrapped  
19 around the pipe that we use as guidance to tap in. And then once  
20 it's tapped in, there's a plug put on, and the ~~SR-B~~ <sup>servi</sup> seal is for  
21 support being that the pipe was tapped in. So the seal holds it  
22 together. It's -- all the bolts on it are torqued by pressure by  
23 psi for pressure -- making sure nothing is leaking. We soap test  
24 everything. And then I write no leaks. Take it off, and you --  
25 it has threads already for a plug, put a plug in. We test the

1 plug after that, make sure the plug is not leaking. All right,  
2 all set. And then we wrap them with primer first and then the  
3 Wax-Tape. And then we also put a Antileaks on the ~~SR-B~~ <sup>Serki</sup> seals and  
4 on whatever coupling, you know, metal coupling.

5 MR. WALLACE: Okay. Thank you.

6 MR. MADERA: You're welcome.

7 MR. WALLACE: I have no more questions.

8 MR. NELSON: David Nelson, Columbia Gas.

9 BY MR. NELSON:

10 Q. Going back through the process you were going through, you  
11 said you took the gauge off, and then you unscrew the plug. Is  
12 that the correct order which you did it?

13 A. That's the order we -- because once you take the bypass off  
14 -- well, prior to taking the plastic tie-in piece off, you shut  
15 the valves.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. So nothing is escaping.

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. And once the bypass is off, we let it settle, make sure  
20 there's no change in the meters. We usually wait 15, 20 minutes.  
21 All right, gauge is still good. Nothing dropped. All right.  
22 Take off the tee.

23 Q. So you took off the tee before you took off the gauge?

24 A. No. He took the gauge off first. He was able to put the  
25 plug on.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. And once start -- once, you know, just tie the plugs in,  
3 tighten it, all right. Once he's taken -- because, you know, once  
4 we cap that, we end cap that other one, that's dead. So we did  
5 the live side first, and once you put the plug in, start threading  
6 off the tee, and I have the plug, and he was like, you ready? I  
7 was, like, yeah. And when I went to put the plug it was *blown from my hand.*

8 Q. So how long after you removed the gauge did you remove the  
9 tee?

10 A. I want to say 3, 5 minutes, if it took that long to thread it  
11 in and soap test it real quick. And it wasn't much time at all.

12 Q. You said couple weeks prior for the gauges there was a  
13 auditor that came out. Do you know who those auditors worked for?


14 A. I'm not *sure* -- I don't know the *names* -- *oh,* the auditors were from  
15 Columbia. It was two gentlemen. Maybe one was Mike. I'm not  
16 sure. I'm not even sure, to be honest. I didn't have much  
17 interaction with them. They sat there the whole time and  
18 observed.

19 Q. Thank you. Who normally watches the gauges?

20 A. Me. Well, pretty much everybody around the hole, but since  
21 I'm in the hole they're at eye level for me. And prior, prior to  
22 any step, our foreman usually asks the inspector, ready? Yep.  
23 Next step. Ready? Yeah. Next step.

24 Q. I'm sorry. One last question. You mentioned if there's a  
25 problem onsite the first person the inspector called, and there

1 was somebody else that he called. Do you know who he called after  
2 that?

3 A. I'm not sure who he called. I know he was trying to ~~get~~ <sup>call</sup>   
4 he was calling someone, you know, what's going on, but I don't  
5 know exactly who he called or how many people he called.


6 Q. Okay. Thank you.

7 BY MR. EVANS:

8 Q. Okay. Just very few more questions, but the one thing -- so  
9 I may not have written it down, but I just want to make sure I  
10 understand this. When you heard the traffic going by, the  
11 emergency vehicles, right, sirens and stuff, and then you have the  
12 tee pop on you, you said 15 minutes, right?

13 A. Um-hmm.

14 Q. What do you think the time was when you actually the first  
15 time you read the gauges?

16 A. First time we read them was when we put them on, put them on  
17 9, 9:30-ish. Well, after the break is when we started setup, and  
18 Matt put them in, I don't know, 9:20, 9:30, around there in the  
19 morning. They were put on before anything was even touched, cut  
20 and capped, anything. And it didn't seem abnormal with the sirens  
21 because if you live in Lawrence there's sirens going all day. So  
22 it was just another day in Lawrence to me. I didn't think  
23 anything abnormal. Only time I noticed that something was  
24 different was when I started seeing <sup>out of town first responders</sup>  what already had ~~—~~ what  
25 happened to us in the hole already had occurred. Then I start

1 seeing like, you know, Dracut and Brentwood, New Hampshire. And  
2 I'm, like, what's going on here? And that's when, you know,  
3 calls, people are yelling there's a house on fire over down the  
4 street. I'm, like, oh, yeah, we're standing there, and we're,  
5 like, oh, it's another house on fire. So but by that time we just  
6 -- my natural reaction was just ~~immediate~~ <sup>evacuate</sup> the houses there within  
7 on the street I was just running door-to-door just trying to get  
8 everybody out.

9 MR. EVANS: Okay. I think that's all I have. Thank you so  
10 much for coming in. It's been a very interesting interview. One  
11 of the most interesting I've heard in a long time. And I do  
12 appreciate you coming in, and we may actually have you in for a  
13 second interview.

14 MR. MADERA: All right.

15 MR. EVANS: But just so you know that it might -- that might  
16 happen.

17 MR. MADERA: All right.

18 MR. EVANS: Okay. Really appreciate it. Thank you so much.

19 MR. MADERA: No problem. My pleasure.

20 MR. EVANS: We learned a lot today.

21 Off the record with Jose Madera.

22 (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: MERRIMACK VALLEY RESIDENTIAL GAS  
FIRES AND EXPLOSIONS  
SEPTEMBER 13, 2018  
Interview of Jose L. Madera, Jr.

ACCIDENT NUMBER: PLD18MR003

PLACE: Lawrence, Massachusetts

DATE: September 16, 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.

  
Katherine Motley  
Transcriber