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 * Accident No.: PLD18MR003
SEPTEMBER 13, 2018 *
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Interview of: WILLIAM DEROCHE

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,

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Columbia Gas

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(On behalf of Mr. Deroche)

I N D E X

I N T E R V I E W

(9:20 a.m.)

MR. EVANS: We are on the record with William Deroche, W-I-L-L-I-A-M, D-E-R-O-C-H-E. Good morning. Today is September 17th. It is now 9:20 a.m. My name is Roger Evans. I'm with the National Transportation Safety Board.

We're at the Essex Community College in Lawrence, Mass. This interview is being conducted as part of the investigation into the South Lawrence multi-residence -- residential explosion that occurred in Lawrence, Mass in Andover on September 13th. This is case number PLD1M -- 18, excuse me. This case number is PLD18MR003.

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

Mr. Deroche, 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 for the record who you have selected to be present during the interview and please give us the spelling of your name.

MR. DEROCHE: Eoin Beirne. That's who's with me.

MR. EVANS: Okay. Can you give us your affiliation and all that, spelling of your name?

MR. BEIRNE: Eoin Beirne, Mintz Levin, for Mr. Deroche; E-O-

I-N, B-E-I-R-N-E.

MR. EVANS: Okay. And the spelling of you name, sir?

MR. DEROCHE: Last or full? Last or full?

MR. EVANS: Full.

MR. DEROCHE: Full?

MR. EVANS: Full name.

MR. DEROCHE: W-I-L-L-I-A-M, D-E-R-O-C-H-E.

MR. EVANS: Thank you.

I'd like to go around the room now and have everyone introduce themselves with their affiliation and spelling of their name.

MR. WALLACE: Richard Wallace, R-I-C-H-A-R-D, 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: I'm sorry. Dave Nelson, Columbia Gas; D-A-V-E, N-E-L-S-O-N.

MR. LEMMERMAN: Darren Lemmerman; D-A-R-R-E-N, Lemmerman, L-E-M-M-E-R-M-A-N. I'm with PHMSA's Accident Investigation Division.

MR. SOUTHWORTH: Jim, J-I-M, Southworth, S-O-U-T-H-W-O-R-T-H. I'm an investigator with the Rail, Pipeline and Hazardous Material Division of the NTSB.

INTERVIEW OF WILLIAM DEROCHE

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. Okay. Thank you, William, for agreeing to talk to us today,

appreciate that. Before we begin, we'd like to get some background information on you. Please give us the name of the company you work for and your job title.

A. Feeney Brothers.

Q. And please spell that.

A. F-E-E-N-E-Y, Brothers, B-R-O-T-H-E—R-S.

Q. Okay. And how long have you been with this firm?

A. Approximately, I think that is my eighth year.

Q. Okay. And your job title?

A. Foreman.

Q. Okay, and you're foreman of a crew, but what type of a crew is it that you are a foreman for?

A. It's a pipe laying crew.

Q. Pipe laying crew. And the types of work that you would do with that pipe laying crew? The types of -- scopes of work that you would do?

A. I install pipe. Anything pertaining to installing the gas line.

Q. Okay.

A. Yeah.

Q. And prior to this position at this company, what were you doing?

A. I was working down in Providence for another company.

Q. The same type of --

A. No, but 2 years -- 2 or 3 years I got out of this, the gas

work. I was doing water, sewer, fiber optic.
Q. Oh, okay. But you've always been in this kind of an excavation type work, where you --
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. And is that for your entire career?
A. No. Before that I was doing gas work also.
Q. So how many years total do you have of working in gas?
A. Twenty-two, I think.
Q. Okay.
A. Twenty-two.
Q. Okay. And have you worked outside of the, of this environment for like -- have you worked for a gas company before as a direct hire?
A. No. No.
Q. Have you always been a subcontractor?
A. Yes.
Q. And do you -- have you worked with multiple gas companies? Like in this 8 years here, have you been focusing on Columbia?
A. Oh, no, no, multiple.
Q. Multiple gas companies?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. Okay, what we'd like you to do is kind of give us a recap, go back in time, from the moment you woke up that day, kind of like when you arrived on scene, and go through the entire day and we'll try not to interrupt you. Just give us as much of the

detail as you can possible give us. And we're talking about who was there, who you talked to, when you were contacted by anyone, where you went, who you saw, all this. What you heard. So we kind of want to get a full summary of what you experienced that day.

A. Okay. I arrived at the jobsite, I think, around 6:30. I made out our safety brief. Then the guys start to arrive. We had our safety brief. We set up our work zone. We proceeded to pull the plates on the hole. Once we had the plates pulled, we started, we started -- what we do first, we put on all the gauge points.

Q. Um-hum.

A. Then we write all the gauges down. They all read 9, 9½ inches.

Q. Yep.

A. Now we started -- we tapped the bypass. Did the -- all this is all pretested too, the bypass and all that. We got to purge out the bypass -- oh, I mean, activated the bypass, opened both valves on each side.

Q. Um-hum.

A. Then we started setting up the tapping equipment, the ALH tapping equipment. We tapped, we tapped all the holes for the bags on each side. We installed the towers that have the bags in them onto the main.

Q. Um-hum.

A. Now we -- then we, according to procedure how to put the bags in order -- they have certain way they need to get dropped. They're all numbered 1, 2, 3, 4. So we did them in sequential order, all the while watching gauges. It's a critical step. When you set bags, you got to keep monitoring gauge. On 2, let the system settle for 15, at least 15 minutes.

Q. Um-hum.

A. We were able to, we were able to blow down the center where we were going to cut out. We purge that out. Made sure we had zero pressure.

Q. Um-hum.

A. Then we proceeded to cut, cut the cast iron out of the way. Once the cast iron was cut, we dry fitted, dry -- actually we -- I went to the -- we went to the plastic, purged out the gas, made sure we had zero. We shut the valve, then purged it out. Shut the valve, then purged it out. Made sure we had adequate shutdown.

Once we had that, we cut the end cap and purged gauge tee off the end of the plastic. Then we, we dry fitted, dry fitted the tie-in piece which is already pretested. Made sure it was going to fit. Then we installed a electrofusion at that point on one end, and on the other we installed a Smith-Blair coupling. We fused the plastic to plastic. Waited a cool time before we can work with the pipe again. Once the cool time was ready, we installed the Smith-Blair coupling, we tightened it up.

Q. Um-hum.
A. Then we proceeded to crack the valve on the plastic, purge out -- oh, I'm sorry. Before we, before we installed that piece, the tie-in piece -- sorry, I'm way ahead. I forgot some -- a step.
Q. Yeah.
A. Before we installed the tie-in piece, as soon as we cut the cast iron out of the way, cut the section of cast iron out, I end-capped the side that was going to be going dead, and broke down all the ALH equipment. Soaped the end cap to make sure. We pulled the bags, soaped the end cap. Made sure everything was tight, not leaking. Then we broke down all that equipment except for the gauge point. Took that off the one side of the main and we installed the tie-in piece like I already explained.
Q. Um-hum.
A. Once the tie-in piece was installed, we opened up the stack on the ALH and we cracked the plastic valve; we purged till we got 100 percent gas, three times. Once we had that, we shut the valve -- I mean, opened the valve all the way, shut the valve on the stack. We pulled the bags and we soap tested both couplings, made sure they're not leaking.
Once that was -- we found out that good, we started breaking down the bypass. We shut both valves. Actually, once I -- we took off all the ALH equipment, plugged the two holes. We shut the two valves on the bypass, took the middle section of plastic

out of the bypass. Once we did that, we went to take the gauge points off. The gauge points came off, they were normal, normal pressure when we took them off.

And then when he went -- my laborer, the laborer went to undo the fitting for the bypass on the -- not the dead side, the live side, it was elevated pressure and it blew off out of his hands. So at that point, we didn't -- I didn't know what was going on. I knew what was going on, but I tried to control the situation. I told -- he was wondering what to do. I instructed him to put his foot on the, on the -- over the tap hole. He did. I made -- we had made up a fitting out of the bypass and we screwed that back in and shut the gas off, got the gas contained.

All the while, my inspector, Rick, he's -- he was making a phone call trying to get a hold of supervisors from the gas company. And then, I don't know how much time elapsed, but it wasn't long; it was like maybe 15, 20 minutes, a supervisor started showing up.

Then they instructed they want to get a gauge point on the main, see what kind of pressure was in there. So we install a stack, purge stack with a gauge setup. And once that was established they read the pressure. Like, Rick read the pressure. I think he said 24. I ain't sure. And then his supervisor instructed him to open -- vent off the gas to a stack.

And at this point people started coming out of their houses saying they smell gas. So instructed the crew to go down the

street getting everybody out of the houses. Tried to shut off any gas meter that we could. I stayed at the hole. I was making sure nobody went near the hole because it was blowing gas. And then eventually the pressure went down. At that point then, at that point we ended up breaking down the stacks and plugging all the holes -- or the two holes that are inside the bypass also.

Then my crew was instructed -- all during this -- halfway through we got the people, getting the people out of the houses, then the gas company took a couple of my guys and they went around and they were trying to close certain valves that they wanted closed. And that was about it, then.

Q. Okay. Just some questions, follow-up. What is Rick's last name?

A. Bedard.

Q. And how do you spell that?

A. B-E-D-A-R-D.

Q. And you've worked with him for a while?

A. Yeah.

Q. Like years?

A. Yeah. Well, since I've been in; 8 years.

Q. Eight years, okay.

A. Not constantly, but off and on.

Q. Off and on, okay. And when you started this work, what type of documentation did you have to start this work, when you did this work?

A. I have a, they call it a tie-in procedure.
Q. Um-hum.
A. Me and -- Rick and I reviewed that. I should have told you that. Rick and I reviewed it before we started the work. We both signed it.
Q. Okay. And signatures for this, these work plans between the foreman and the inspector are required?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. And when you say you reviewed it, would you say it was a 5-minute review, 20-minute review, or minute review? What would you say the time you spent?
A. Well, we read through it. It was a normal, normal tie-in procedure.
Q. How many pages?
A. Just one -- actually two: one drawing; one page, one written page.
Q. Okay. Two-page, two-page document. Okay. And was there anything that you saw on this particular document that was any different? I mean, was everything --
A. No. Everything was like a regular --
Q. Nothing unusual, unique?
A. No.
Q. Nothing like that? Okay. So the -- that area that you were at that day, had you been at this area other days?
A. Yes.

Q. And when did you start in this area?
A. It was back in June.
Q. I mean, in this particular --
A. Oh, this area?
Q. Yeah, in that --
A. I started that, oh, I think it was 3 days before, 3½ days before.
Q. Okay. And you, I mean, you actually had -- you had dig permits and all this kind of stuff?
A. Yes.
Q. They allegedly came out and mapped it and then you started your -- a few days before all this?
A. Yes.
Q. And at night you would cover it up with metal and then come back the next day, remove the cap and --
A. Yes.
Q. -- go back at it? And the scopes -- the scope you did once you got it excavated, what was that?
A. Once it was excavated?
Q. Yeah.
A. Clean, prep the pipe, go around all the -- install fittings.
Q. Okay. Was there any surprises when you excavated this versus what you thought you were going to see once the, once you had all the pipe?
A. Well, there was an extra bell joint in the hole. I had to

extend the hole a little bit. That was about it, the only thing unusual.
Q. Okay. As far as this activity, did it take any longer than a normal activity or were you just -- this is all routine stuff?
A. No. All routine, yes.
Q. Okay. So you said that once the gas -- you had capped the gas and then all of a sudden a supervisor came by and said I'd like you to go ahead and vent that gas?
A. Yeah, he wanted to get a gauge on it first.
Q. Right.
A. And then, the setup, the quickest setup I had to get a gauge on in, was a vent stack with a gauge on it.
Q. Right.
A. So once we got -- he got the reading he wanted, he told Rick to open the valve and start --
Q. And how long did it take from -- you said you thought it was 24?
A. I think he said 24.
Q. So how long did I take from the time you saw the 24, you know, to where you could vent?
A. It wasn't long.
Q. Less than 10 minutes?
A. I'd, yeah, say -- yeah, probably yeah.
Q. A brief period then?
A. Yeah.

Q. It wasn't a half hour?
A. No.
Q. Okay. So, and then, then you said that calls came in, or you were hearing people complain about gas odors.
A. Yeah, and coming out of their houses.
Q. Out of their houses. Okay. So did you hear anything in the neighborhoods at all when all this was going on?
A. Yeah, I was hearing a lot of fire and sirens.
Q. Now what was the timing of the fire sirens to what you were doing? Previous to or after?
A. After. After.
Q. You didn't hear any sirens before you did this work?
A. Nope.
Q. Okay. And were you hearing sirens coming from multiple directions?
A. Yeah. Well, one direct -- only one direction far as we were. But you could hear them all over the -- all over. It was like a couple sets of them.
Q. Did you notice anything on the skyline?
A. Yeah, there was a -- after a while we seen -- the officer said a house was on fire, and he ran down the street behind us, one of the houses. Then down the other way, it was after -- probably 5 minutes after, 10 minutes after, we started seeing smoke come out of a chimney, out of a house.
Q. Um-hum. Are you confident that you heard sirens post this,

or --
A. Yes.
Q. Not pre?
A. No post.
Q. Post, not pre. Okay. So when Rick saw this happen, did he make any comments?
A. He just got right on the phone. He didn't --
Q. You weren't talking with him?
A. We both didn't know what's going on, so he called right away. He tried to get ahold of somebody.
Q. I mean, kind of in a state of panic kind of thought?
A. Oh, no, not panic, but just --
Q. Anxious?
A. Yeah, something's going radically wrong --
Q. Okay.
A. -- type of deal.
Q. In your career of 8 years, have you had anything similar to this happen?
A. No.
MR. EVANS: Okay. That's all the questions from me right now. Thank you.
MR. WALLACE: Just give me a moment.
BY MR. WALLACE:
Q. Richard Wallace speaking. You said that you had set up the bypass then you opened the valves for the bypass and you checked

the gauges?
A. Um-hum.
Q. Did you make a record of that anywhere?
A. No.
Q. You mentioned that you opened the valves on the ALH. What is the ALH?
A. It's a bagging system. It's a contained system where there's no gas release. The valve I opened was a -- it's a purge stack kind of deal on the equipment.
Q. Do you, did you ever have any training or periodic training on setting up and doing tie-overs, bypass systems?
A. On ALH, yes.
Q. But what about just the whole process of doing a tie-in system?
A. Well, on-the-job, going through following procedure on what things needs to be done.
Q. Do you have operator qualifications?
A. Oh, that, yeah. I have OQs. I got OQs for bagging and stopping, and all that.
Q. How often do you get training?
A. It's a periodic -- I don't know exactly what, 2 years, 3 years.
Q. Did they have a manual for doing this on site for you?
A. The tie-in procedure, that's the only thing.
Q. That's the only --

A. Yeah.
Q. -- procedure they had on site? Were you monitoring the gauges at all times?
A. Yes.
Q. You yourself? Was there anybody else doing that?
A. Yeah. I instruct the whole crew to keep their eyes on the gauge constantly.
Q. Do they have any other instructions other than to watch the gauges?
A. Yeah, I was instructing them on what steps to be done next.
Q. Well, I guess I'll clarify it by -- so you told them to watch the gauges. Did you say anything else to them about watching the gauges?
A. Just keep your eye on the gauges.
Q. Okay. So, just for clarification, when you took the bypass apart, it started blowing gas out of the bypass?
A. No.
Q. It did not?
A. No. The valves were shut.
Q. Okay. Was there gas blowing out of the bypass at any time?
A. No. Just a, just a little release of gas that was in the pipe, which is nothing pretty much, once the valves are shut.
Q. The supervisor that came out to the jobsite, what was his name?
A. Dana -- I don't know -- recollect his last name. His first

name was Dana.
Q. Had he been to the jobsite previously?
A. No.
Q. So it was the first time. So did you have other inspectors from Columbia Gas going to the jobsite?
A. On this particular job? No. Rick was there throughout this tie-in process.
Q. And Rick works for CMA?
A. Yes.
Q. Or he works for you?
A. No, CMA.
Q. So he was the inspector?
A. Yes.
Q. What else did he do on the jobsite other than inspect?
A. He takes measurements, documents pipes going in the ground. He -- because like, we talk about what's got to be done next, when it's going to be done.
Q. And you said that you had been working with him for 8 years?
A. Oh, on and off. So like I'll get him for a job -- they'll give me a job, he'll be my inspector. I'll go to another job, I'll get a new inspector.
Q. Did he make -- did he -- was he there prior to you going through the tie-in process? Did he see the configuration you had constructed --
A. Yes.

Q. -- of your bypass?
A. Yes.
Q. Did he make any comments about it?
A. Nope.
MR. WALLACE: That's all I have right now.
BY MR. NELSON:
Q. Dave Nelson, Columbia Gas. Can you describe Dana for me?
A. Older man, probably late fifties, sixties? Glasses, gray hair.
Q. Thank you. How many ALH equipment do you have on site -- did you have on site that day?
A. How many towers?
Q. Yes.
A. Four.
MR. NELSON: That's it for now.
BY MR. LEMMERMAN:
Q. Dan Lemmerman speaking. I was trying to keep up with everything you're saying and trying to put it all in my head, so I'm going to see if I -- so some of this will be a repeat from the point where you started to take off the bypass system.
A. Um-hum.
Q. So you had pulled the bags out first on the far end before you --
A. Right.
Q. So go ahead -- I might stop you and clarify some questions.

So go ahead and start from that point.
A. When it was done or --
Q. After the bags were taken out, what did you do next?
MR. EVANS: Excuse me. Can we go ahead and at least mark that drawing up and -- this is Roger Evans -- and identify while you're on that, just draw a sketch or put a note on there "bag location 1" that we're talking about, so we can pick this up in 6 or 7 months. So you called that bag number 1?
A. No, I think -- I think, bag number 1, I think it was --
BY MR. LEMMERMAN:
Q. If you know.
A. I ain't sure. See, this one -- I think it was this one. I ain't sure.
Q. Okay.
A. But you want to know from after I took the equipment off the cap side?
Q. Right. Yeah, after you took the equipment off the cap side, what did you do next?
A. We dry fitted the tie-in piece, made sure it was going to fit, cut it to size, and installed electrofusion coupling and a Smith-Blair coupling. Electrofused the plastic to plastic together. Once that was cool time was done -- once the cool time was done, we tightened up the Smith-Blair fitting. After that, we went to the valve on the 8-inch -- 6-inch plastic. We opened the valve on the stack on the first -- on the ALH tower.

Q. Where was that valve on the 6-inch plastic located?
A. It was behind, you can't see it. It's just behind the bagging. Probably about a foot into the bagging, foot and a half, maybe 2.
Q. Okay.
A. I proceeded to -- Rick had a CGI. I proceeded to crack the valve.
Q. Which valve?
A. The 6-inch plastic valve.
Q. Okay.
A. We let it purge through until we had three readings, 100 percent, and I opened the valve, fully opened the valve. Do you want me to keep going?
Q. Yep, please.
A. Okay. Once I opened the valve, we pulled the bags.
Q. Which bags?
A. The towers.
Q. The two remaining bags?
A. Yes, the two remaining bags. Took -- broke down the tower, tower equipment. Installed plugs on the main. And we have -- it's done.
Q. So the only thing left at this point is the bypass and the two pressure gauges on each end?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay.

A. Now we went to the bypass, shut each valve on each side. Took the plastic jumper piece right off the fittings. Went to the gauge -- gauge fittings, gauge points, removed those.
Q. Do know what those gauges read at that point?
A. Nine and a half. Then we went to break down the bypass fitting, and once the bypass fitting was just about off, it blew off, blew off on a laborer's hand. The elevated pressure in the line.
Q. Did you read the gauges at that point?
A. The gauges weren't in.
Q. You removed those before the bypass?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay.
A. Well, not not before the bypass.
Q. Bypass fittings.
A. Fittings, yeah.
Q. Which bypass fitting did they remove first when that --
A. The live side, not the cap side.
Q. How much time elapsed between the time that the pressure gauge fittings were removed before you got to remove the bypass?
A. Not long. I had them stop and tighten up a plug first. I'd say, 5 minutes, 10 minutes. That's rough guess.
Q. So about 5 minutes elapsed from the time you probably took the last read on that pressure gauge?
A. When the last one came off.

Q. And when that plug came off that you found excess pressure?
A. Yeah. I guess, yeah, 10 minutes, right around there.
Q. Okay. Go ahead and let us know again what happened after you pulled off that bypass fitting.
A. It was elevated pressure. It was blowing pretty good. The laborer looked to me for direction. I told him to put his foot over the outlet. And at that point, we made up a fitting to put back on the main to shut down on the flow of gas. The laborer installed it and shut the flow of gas.
Q. So what kind of time window were we looking there?
A. Five minutes.
Q. Five?
A. Yeah, 5, not even.
Q. Okay. And after you put that fitting in, go ahead.
A. We put the fitting in and we shut off. That's when Rick was on the phone trying to get a supervisor from him company. Took him, took him a little bit to get ahold of the right people he needed to get ahold of. So at that point we just waiting for direction, what to do.
Q. Okay. So at that point you notice anything going on around you, as far as the neighbors and stuff? Or see anything?
A. Yeah, after a little bit, the neighbors comes outside. Like I said before, they started coming out of the house, houses, saying they smell gas, and, and --
Q. How much time did that lapse, what time you put that plug in

to the time the people --
A. Not long; 15 minutes, 20 minutes -- 15, I'd say.
Q. So while Rick was calling for help, that's about the same time people started coming out?
A. Yeah. Well, a little later than that.
Q. A little after that?
A. Yeah, it was like 10, 15 minutes then.
Q. So when you started seeing people coming out of the house, it was about 10, 15 minutes into it. When did you start hearing sirens? Before this, after this, about the same time?
A. About the same time, yeah.
Q. Okay.
A. And then Dana showed up, instructed -- he wanted a gauge point put on the pipe. We set that up.
Q. Which part did you put that into?
A. I put it into the bypass outlet, the one that come off the main.
Q. Okay.
A. We took a reading. Then Dana instructed him to open the valve.
Q. And the reading was? The 20- --
A. Yeah, I think he said 24.
Q. PSI?
A. Yeah, PSI. I think he said that. Not definitely sure though.

Q. So you heard the sirens and stuff and then Dana showed up and said put a gauge on. By the time you took a first read from the time you talked about the sirens and people coming out, what kind of time had elapsed at that point?
A. At least 20, 25 minutes -- 25 minutes, I think, until we started venting it off, the time when --
Q. Um-hum.
A. Maybe even a little longer. Because it took a little while for Dana to get there. At least 10 minutes.
Q. Okay. About 10 for Dana to show up, maybe another 10 -- 10 minutes to figure out what you want to do, make a thing, fitting, get it installed.
A. I was pretty quick getting them that fitting on there because I had it all made up already. I just grabbed it in the truck and put it on.
Q. Okay.
A. And then, we started going down the street trying to shut any meters that we could, and -- because at that point we seen all the people coming out, the crew, a bunch of gas -- and a gas company guy showed up too. I forget, I don't know who it was. He was going with my guys door to door, getting everybody out, trying to shut meters off. And then I stayed by the hole cause the gas was venting.
Q. Okay. So when he got that 24-pound reading, you said to vent off gas -- did you pull out the gauge or a different plug, or?

A. No, because I had a vent stack all hooked up. And the gauge was incorporated in it.
Q. Gotcha. Okay. And after you -- you came back after you turned off a few meters and --
A. I stayed by the hole. I went to the first house, but I came right back to the hole, because everybody had disbursed and I didn't want anybody going near the hole.
Q. Okay. And then you said something about you saw a pressure drop.
A. Oh, the pressure eventually went down after a while.
Q. So the venting was helping in that area too?
A. Somewhat, yeah. And then they started shutting valves and everything was starting to come down.
Q. What was the last reading you saw on the gauge, I guess?
A. Two pounds.
Q. So that was probably due to the venting the gas maybe? Or you --
A. Possible. Plus they were shutting valves off.
Q. Okay.
A. Yeah.
Q. So do you have any kind of time frame you could share, from the time you read 24 to the time you saw 2 pounds?
A. I just -- I don't know. I was just --
Q. I know time kind of stops, but--
A. Yeah, it was, it was a little while, it was a little while.

I, I really couldn't pin point to tell you.
Q. Maybe another half hour, 10 minutes?
A. At least a half hour, maybe more.
Q. Okay. What did you do in the hole after you saw the 2 pounds?
A. The vent -- it eventually went back to like low pressure. I couldn't get another -- we couldn't get a reading on it because it was a pound, pound gauge. But eventually it went back to low. And once that happened, we broke down the vent stack, plugged the hole.
Q. Do you have any recollection what time this might have been at the end when you saw that back to zero PS -- zero pounds?
A. I can't -- I don't know.
Q. Or less than 1?
A. I don't know.
Q. Okay. Thank you.
MR. EVANS: Any questions?
MR. SOUTHWORTH: Nope.
BY MR. EVANS:
Q. This is Roger Evans. I'd like to know -- we're going to be building the timeline of this for sure, but -- so the moment you arrived on the scene was what time again? When your whole crew was assembled and you pulled off, let's say, the metal, do you know what time of day that was?
A. It was about 7:30.

Q. 7:30. So the hole was exposed at 7:30?
A. Yeah, right around in there.
Q. And then, after 7:30, did you take any breaks?
A. We took a, we took a break before we started cutting into the main.
Q. And what time would that have been?
A. I couldn't tell you.
Q. I mean, before lunch, though?
A. Actually the break we took was when we -- the break we took was when we electro-fused the coupling. We had to wait for cool time and that's when we broke. So I don't know what time that would have been.
Q. It was before lunch?
A. I think it was right around, right around there somewhere.
Q. But then after you came back from the break, was it time for lunch?
A. No, it was right around that time, right around lunchtime, like somewhere around there. Maybe 1 o'clock. Might have been after lunch. I don't, I don't --
Q. You don't remember.
A. I wasn't looking at my watch.
Q. Okay. Okay, so -- but you remember, you recall taking a break --
A. Yes.
Q. -- after you did the fusion?

A. Yeah.
Q. Okay.
A. Yeah, because there's a minimum of cool time and we can't do anything until that's cool.
Q. And that's, what, 15 minutes or something?
A. No, it's 40.
Q. Forty, okay. But you don't know if that was coincident with your lunchtime?
A. No.
Q. Okay. Did you take breaks in the afternoon?
A. No, once we started the process, we can't -- we don't stop until --
Q. But you all had lunch that day, right?
A. Hmm?
Q. You did have lunch that day, correct?
A. When we broke for the coupling, that's when we had -- you could eat lunch, do whatever, get a coffee.
Q. Okay. And do you know how long that would have been? Is that the 40 minutes you're talking about?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. Okay, and then when you left for the day and you're -- covered up the metal or the pit and all that, what time was that?
A. Oh, it was 6 -- 5, 6, maybe 6. It was just starting getting real dark. So what time, what time it gets dark.
Q. So it was at dusk?

A. Yeah, dusk. And it was just starting to get dark.
Q. Okay. At dusk you put the metal back on and left.
A. Yeah.
Q. Something like that?
A. Yeah, we went to the, went to the gas company.
Q. Did you happen to look at your watch at any time during the day to say, well, that's the sirens, that was at this time? Or did you make any reference to a watch or your phone or anything like that as far as timelines, just, you know, what time it was? Do you recall --
A. No, just when we fused the coupling.
Q. That's the only time?
A. And I can't -- I think it was -- I couldn't tell you. I can't remember what time that was. It's written on the coupling though.
Q. Oh, yeah, that's right. Okay. You didn't happen to take -- I mean, I know you said you didn't have any record of the gauges written down, but did you happen to take any pictures of that stuff?
A. No, no. This is the only picture I took.
Q. Oh, okay, okay. You always take pictures like that?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. Okay. The -- when you vented this pipe, did you do an evacuation?
A. What? The --

Q. When the guy came back or whoever that was from Columbia Gas and said I want you guys to open this valve when it's at 24, and you let it bleed down to zero, or a couple pounds or something, you said, did -- were you instructed to go so many feet away and evacuate people?

A. Yeah, they were already coming out of the houses and were -- they were getting into the -- there's a park across the street and they were all going into the park.

Q. But did you have the area taped off, or you had people --

A. Yes.

Q. Like 50 feet away or 100 feet away?

A. No, not that far.

MR. EVANS: Okay. Okay, that's all I have for now.

MR. WALLACE: I'm all set. Richard Wallace speaking.

MR. EVANS: Okay.

MR. NELSON: Dave Nelson, all set.

MR. LEMMERMAN: Darren Lemmerman, good.

MR. SOUTHWORTH: Southworth, good.

MR. EVANS: Okay, I'm good. This concludes the interview. Thank you very much for coming in today. Appreciate it.

(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 William Deroche
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