

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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EXPLOSION AT THE R.M. PALMER CANDY *

FACTORY IN WEST READING, *

Accident No.: PLD23LR002

PENNSYLVANIA, ON MARCH 24, 2023 *

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Interview of: CLARK M. BASHORE, JR., Maintenance Mechanic
R.M. Palmer Company

West Reading, Pennsylvania

Tuesday,
April 4, 2023

APPEARANCES:

RACHEL GUNARATNAM, Hazmat Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

KIM WEST, Investigator-in-Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

TERRI COOPER-SMITH, Pipeline Safety Supervisor
Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission

RICHARD GARLAND, Investigator
Occupational Safety and Health Administration

LOGAN SMITH, VP of Operations
R.M. Palmer Company

COREY WRIGHT
Representative for Mr. Bashore

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I N T E R V I E W

(11:42 a.m. EST)

1
2
3 MS. GUNARATNAM: Good morning. My name is Rachel Gunaratnam.
4 I'm a hazmat investigator with the National Transportation Safety
5 Board out of Washington, D.C. Today is April 4th, and the time is
6 11:42 p.m. -- a.m., sorry, Eastern Standard Time. And, we're
7 currently the Palmer Building on [REDACTED].

8 We're here in response to the natural gas incident that
9 occurred on March 24th, 2023, in West Reading, Pennsylvania. And
10 today we are interviewing --

11 MR. BASHORE: Clark M. Bashore, Jr.

12 MS. GUNARATNAM: And can you spell your last name?

13 MR. BASHORE: B-a-s-h-o-r-e.

14 MS. GUNARATNAM: Thank you. You're -- you are free to have a
15 representative to consult with during the interview, and --

16 MR. BASHORE: I'd like to have Corey Wright for me.

17 MS. GUNARATNAM: Thank you. I'm sorry. Can you say your
18 name for --

19 MR. WRIGHT: Sure, Corey Wright, C-o-r-e-y, W-r-i-g-h-t.

20 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Great. Thanks. So just so you know,
21 the purpose of the investigation is just for safety. We don't
22 assign fault or blame or any kind of liability. Our sole mission
23 is to prevent this accident from happening again. So, the NTSB,
24 however, cannot offer any guarantee of confidentiality or immunity
25 or from any legal proceedings by other agencies, whether local,

1 state or federal.

2 And then you will be provided a transcript of this interview,
3 and it will be placed on our public docket which will be available
4 through our website.

5 So I just wanted to start off with introductions with the
6 rest of the room. We have, to the left of me?

7 MS. WEST: Kim West with the National Transportation Safety
8 Board. I'm the investigator-in-charge.

9 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Terri Cooper-Smith with the Pennsylvania
10 Public Utility Commission, pipeline safety supervisor.

11 MR. GARLAND: Richard Garland, OSHA investigator.

12 MR. SMITH: Logan Smith, R.M. Palmer representative, VP of
13 operations.

14 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Thank you.

15 INTERVIEW OF CLARK M. BASHORE, JR.

16 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

17 Q. Let's just go ahead and start with the background, your
18 position and just how long you've been with the company.

19 A. I've been with the company about 22 years, maintenance
20 mechanic in Building 2. Also maintenance coordinator.

21 Q. Also for Building 2?

22 A. Yes, and Building 1.

23 Q. So maintenance coordinator for Building 1 and 2.

24 A. And 2.

25 Q. Got it.

- 1 A. Correct.
- 2 Q. And you're also a line mechanic?
- 3 A. Yes.
- 4 Q. Okay. And what line?
- 5 A. Line 2.
- 6 Q. Line 2.
- 7 A. Well, sorry, Line 6, Building 2.
- 8 Q. Line 6, Building 2. Got it. Can you describe your duties?
- 9 What are you responsible for?
- 10 A. I'm responsible for foiler changeovers, just day-to-day
- 11 foiler calls or machinery calls.
- 12 Q. Is that in any building?
- 13 A. Yes, yes, that could be in Building 1 or in Building 2.
- 14 Q. Okay. Foiler changeovers. Is that the name of it?
- 15 A. Yes, yes.
- 16 Q. What does that entail exactly?
- 17 A. The removal of parts that are going from an egg shape to a
- 18 ball shape, you would change the foilers to compensate for the
- 19 shape change.
- 20 Q. Okay. All right. Why don't we just go ahead and -- on the
- 21 day of the accident, Friday, just walk us through when you first
- 22 started, what time of day you started and --
- 23 A. Started?
- 24 Q. Yeah, and where you parked and that kind of thing like.
- 25 A. I parked behind the Building 1 boiler house where maintenance

1 parks, entered the building, roughly 6:45 a.m., made my way up the
2 stairs to the maintenance shop on the first floor of Building 1,
3 and started the day at 7 o'clock. Going to Building 2, line 6,
4 roughly around 8:30 that morning, to start the changeover, and
5 pretty much spent the whole day in Building 2 doing the changeover
6 until about 3. 3:05 I left that building to pass onto the second
7 shift mechanic where I was at.

8 Q. And, when you say you were doing the changeover, can you
9 describe that process?

10 A. That's back in the foiler room, removing the egg shape parts
11 from the foilers and installing the new ball tooling onto the
12 foilers.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. So there's a lot of moving parts in those that have to be
15 removed, accounted for and then new stuff going on.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. And that's day was all in Building 2 when you were doing
19 that?

20 A. Correct.

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. Correct.

23 Q. So were you going from the basement, first floor, second
24 floor, when you were doing that work?

25 A. At one point I was in the basement of Building 2. Mogel,

1 it's the company that does our fire extinguishers, and that was
2 roughly around 11 o'clock, I had to show them where the -- there
3 was a faulty fire extinguisher that he was having to retag.

4 Q. Okay. Where was that fire extinguisher?

5 A. That was down in the basement of Building 2.

6 Q. On what side of the basement?

7 A. Just down the steps by tank 1, 2 and 3.

8 Q. Okay. And how many fire extinguishers are in that area?

9 A. Coming in the door, there was one, two -- two that were seen,
10 but there's probably at least two more within the building but --

11 Q. Okay.

12 A -- fully remembering where every single is, but they are
13 marked.

14 Q. And that was Mogel.

15 A. Mogel.

16 Q. M-o-g-u-l [sic].

17 A. Mogel.

18 Q. They're your fire extinguisher maintenance people?

19 A. Yes, yes.

20 Q. Okay. Do they also do your sprinkler system?

21 A. No, that I'm not sure -- I'm not sure who does the
22 sprinklers.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. But we do have them come in for that.

25 Q. Right. So you do -- can you describe the fire protection

1 system in Building No. 2? Does it have fire sprinklers?

2 A. Yes, there are sprinkler systems all floors --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. -- basement, first floor and the breakroom area/maintenance.

5 Q. Got it.

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. And do you inspect those?

8 A. We don't per se inspect them, but if there was a problem we
9 would have to look into repairing them or shutting the system
10 down. We have a protocol to shutting that down if it's an
11 accidental hit of a sprinkler.

12 Q. Right. Okay. And you call outside help for that?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Okay. Any issues with the fire sprinkler system in the last
15 year?

16 A. No.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. No.

19 Q. Did you have any issues that day with the gas appliances for
20 Building No. 2?

21 A. No, no.

22 Q. So you were helping Mogel with the tag.

23 A. Just to locate the tag.

24 Q. Yeah, the fire extinguisher. And what did you do after that?

25 A. After that, went back to, back to the foiling room of

1 Building 2 to continue foiler changes. And then at one point,
2 yes, I was in Building 1 for a break.

3 Q. For a break, yeah.

4 A. For lunch.

5 Q. Okay. And, then after lunch, where did you go?

6 A. Back to Building 2.

7 Q. To the foiling room?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay. And you finished out the rest of the day there?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Yep.

13 Q. Who did you interact with while you were you there?

14 A. The line tag -- another -- there was another mechanic, three
15 operators.

16 Q. And do you know their names by any chance?

17 A. Yeah, Darrell, Darrell Ritchey (ph.) -- oh, my. Sorry.

18 Q. No, take your time.

19 A. There was Darrell Ritchey -- I can't remember the other
20 girl's name, and then it was Darrell Ritchey, Victor, Victor
21 Malone (ph.) -- oh, my God. Lois. I wish I could remember. I
22 always talk to the girl, and I can't remember her name.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. There's so many, there's so many faces and --

25 Q. Sure.

1 A. -- names, but --

2 Q. So, Darrell, Lois and --

3 A. Darrell, Lois, Victor. Oh, Gary, Gary was helping me with
4 the foilers.

5 Q. He's the other mechanic?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Yes. He was changing foilers over with me. And then Evette
9 (ph.), Evette, I think was the, was the other operator that was
10 there.

11 Q. So you had four operators.

12 A. Well, three. Maybe it was four at one, at one point. Yeah,
13 because usually when we're doing the changeover --

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. -- there could be one to two --

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. -- more people over there.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. But I was focused on my foilers.

20 Q. Do you work -- did you work that whole week?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Starting Monday --

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. -- through Friday. Okay. Did you have any -- did you smell
25 any gas leading up to that --

1 A. No.

2 Q. -- Friday at all?

3 A. No.

4 Q. Inside, outside, anything?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Okay. Do you know if anyone during that week touched or was
7 like near the gas furnace, I mean the gas water heater or the two
8 gas blowers?

9 A. Not to my knowledge --

10 Q. Knowledge, okay.

11 A. -- no.

12 Q. Did Darrell, Lois, Victor, Evette, did they smell -- like did
13 they tell you if they smelled gas or anything?

14 A. No.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. No.

17 Q. And you were there, you were there that day until 3 o'clock?

18 A. Yes, just after 3.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Yeah, I left that building about maybe 5 after 3.

21 Q. Okay. All right. And then where did you go after that?

22 A. Then I went to the maintenance shop of Building 1 to pass
23 onto Mike Breedy, what was going on, what we were looking to
24 accomplish through the changeover, just basically giving the
25 information he needed to move on.

1 Q. Just giving him an update kind of thing?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. Yeah. And then I left out, punched out, and went down
5 through Building 1 to the boiler house parking lot, and left to go
6 -- head home.

7 Q. Yeah. And so as you were walking out, you didn't smell
8 anything?

9 A. No.

10 Q. No.

11 A. Nothing.

12 Q. No report that we at all of that?

13 A. Not that, not that I was --

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. -- notified about.

16 Q. Do people ever report any kind of things like that to you?

17 A. They haven't.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. But I mean, but yes, if that would have been the case, they
20 could have asked me about it --

21 Q. Sure.

22 A. -- but I have nothing on that.

23 Q. Okay. And so, if there were any issues -- like what kind of
24 things would people report to you typically?

25 A. Any, any -- if they would smell something out of the

1 ordinary, they would call me. That might be electrical smelling
2 or --

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. -- scents like that. But usually a lot of times it's
5 hydraulic fluid or a bad bearing --

6 Q. Right.

7 A. -- just odd smells.

8 Q. And any issues that with electric or any hot bearing or
9 anything?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. No.

13 Q. Okay. So after you left the scene, where did you go?

14 A. Home.

15 Q. Home. Okay.

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. So, since you've been there for so long, I wanted to ask,
18 have you had any like fire incidents at that building or Building
19 1?

20 A. Building 1, yes.

21 Q. Okay. Could you describe --

22 A. It was a shorted out heat cable that caught the pipe
23 insulation.

24 Q. Heat cable.

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. And was it in between Building 1 and 2 or was it --
2 A. Oh, no, that was -- it was actually up on line 2.
3 Q. Line 2.
4 A. Line 2, which is the third floor of Building 1.
5 Q. Okay. And do you remember the date of that or approximate?
6 A. That's a long -- that's -- I would have to say probably 15
7 years ago.
8 Q. Oh, okay. A long time ago.
9 A. Yes, yes, that's the only --
10 Q. Yeah.
11 A. -- incident of that that I recall.
12 Q. Anything that happened in 2022?
13 A. Not that, not that I recall.
14 Q. Okay.
15 A. Not that I recall.
16 Q. Do you remember in 2021 when they were installing a new gas
17 service line to Building No. 2 --
18 A. Yes, I do remember that.
19 Q. Were you present when they were doing that?
20 A. Yeah, through the day, yes, back and forth.
21 Q. Okay.
22 A. Yes.
23 Q. Did you -- were you standing outside observing that?
24 A. For a little bit. It was mainly go from Building 1 to
25 Building 2.

1 Q. Okay. Yeah, so you saw the meter and riser that were
2 installed?

3 A. Yes, correct.

4 Q. Any issues there that you observed?

5 A. Nothing, nothing out of the ordinary except for it was in the
6 building, and now they put it outside the building, and then --

7 Q. Yeah.

8 A. -- that's when we -- I had called I'm pretty sure it was
9 Burkey Construction did a guardrail across so if anyone would come
10 across and -- to protect, to protect that meter.

11 Q. Oh, okay. A guardrail around it. There was a guardrail?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. It was I want to say 6x6 box tubing that went from I-beam to
15 I-beam where the tether for the truck -- unloading truck driver
16 and that. So it was between there and the meter set behind that
17 in between the --

18 Q. Okay. Did that -- was that guardrail in place at the time of
19 the accident?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. All right. Has cars ever hit it or anything like that, that
24 meter set?

25 A. Nope.

1 Q. Nothing.

2 A. No.

3 Q. Did -- when UGI installed it, did they interact with you guys
4 after they finished?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Oh, okay.

7 A. No.

8 Q. All right. Have you done any -- with regard to emergency
9 response procedures for that -- for the buildings, what is -- what
10 are they, those procedures?

11 A. The emergency.

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. Throughout the year, we do fire drills.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. And what do those typically look like?

17 A. The fire drill, somebody would just come in, pull the pull
18 and you have muster areas that you went to and --

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. -- that way, everybody was accounted for and out of the
21 building.

22 Q. Okay. And under what circumstances are they trained to
23 typically pull the --

24 A. When they -- when it's coming up on the time that -- a
25 certain time, I think it was like every 6 months to a year that

1 they would do the fire drill --

2 Q. Drills, okay.

3 A. -- so they could -- so everybody was on board.

4 Q. Was that the extent of the emergency response training, fire
5 drills?

6 A. Well, fire drills but also they have what they would call
7 code blue, like for instance, first aid training that you would go
8 to, but --

9 Q. Did everyone in the buildings do that, that training, code
10 blue and --

11 A. No, no. It was only a few of us volunteered to --

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. -- to do it --

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. -- and that, but on average, we probably had six, six people
16 per shift --

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. -- to do it.

19 Q. So, in the last year or so, including 2022, have you had any,
20 I guess, odor issues?

21 A. No.

22 Q. No.

23 A. No.

24 Q. Never.

25 A. The only, the only time that I remember any kind of gas was

1 it was just that the boiler house, but that meter, that meter was
2 replaced but it was nothing that was really out of the ordinary.
3 It just smelled. You would smell a little bit of gas there.

4 Q. Okay. So you're familiar with the gas odor, what it smelled
5 like?

6 A. Yes. Oh, yes.

7 Q. Yeah, yeah. And UGI came out for that?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay. And do you remember the approximate date? It's okay
10 if you don't.

11 A. It's quite a while. I would say maybe 2 years, 2 years ago
12 that that problem was fixed.

13 Q. Okay. Do you know if UGI ever -- they would ever interact
14 with the facility for like training or anything like that?

15 A. Not that, not that I'm aware of.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Nothing that I was involved in.

18 Q. Okay. So did you -- did any employees ever get like natural
19 gas training ever?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Was it part of your fire drills or --

22 A. No.

23 Q. -- safety training or anything like that?

24 A. No.

25 Q. So what kind of safety training would you guys get?

1 A. As far as maintenance and everything, it's the safety
2 training as far as a lot of us with the -- just the machinery,
3 lockout/tagout and all those things to show -- being shown what
4 things need to be shut down to work on a machine --

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. -- and stuff like that.

7 Q. Okay. Got it. So it's any time you're interacting with the
8 machines, you guys did some safety training --

9 A. Safety, yes.

10 Q. -- and like that.

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Did you do it in house or did you have somebody else do it?

13 A. In house.

14 Q. In house. Okay. Any construction projects that occurred
15 between Buildings 1 and 2 in the last couple years? Like
16 excavation.

17 A. Yeah, they were doing some cosmetic to the repointing the
18 bricks on the one wall. That might have been a year and a half
19 ago.

20 Q. Okay. Just like the façade of the building.

21 A. Yeah. Yes.

22 Q. Okay. Any kind of excavation projects around the buildings?

23 A. No.

24 Q. In the last year, prior to? How about 10 years ago or 5
25 years ago?

1 A. No.

2 Q. No.

3 A. No.

4 Q. That you know of.

5 A. No.

6 Q. Okay. Did you ever -- do you know which employees would
7 interact with the gas blowers or the water heater?

8 A. We -- usually if there -- the only incident that I remember
9 as far as the gas heater was -- that was probably 5 years ago. We
10 had Berkshire Mechanical, they had to replace that hot water
11 heater in the basement of Building 2.

12 Q. Five years ago?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. At least 5 years ago.

16 Q. Right. That was a brand new heater.

17 A. Yeah, brand new hot water heater.

18 Q. Okay. Did -- and Berkshire Construction installed the gas
19 piping and everything in --

20 A. Well, yeah. Where the unit was at, to the existing piping.

21 Q. Okay. To the existing. Okay. Any issues there? Did you
22 smell gas after that?

23 A. No.

24 Q. No.

25 A. No.

1 Q. What about the blowers? Do you know when those were
2 installed?

3 A. That I do not know. I do not know.

4 Q. Do you know if they were new or ever replaced over the time
5 you've worked there?

6 A. They may have because a large portion of the 23 years, I was
7 on third shift. So they very well may have been replaced while I
8 was on third.

9 Q. Okay. Yeah. Are you familiar with the -- like do you turn
10 on the gas -- the blowers at all?

11 A. No, no.

12 Q. Okay. Who would from your --

13 A. I think Hoovinal (ph.) would but for the most part, all they
14 would do is turn the thermostat, the thermostat down. Sometimes
15 when they said it was cold, they would just turn the thermostat
16 up.

17 Q. Oh, so they only messed with the -- I mean they only operate
18 the thermostat that's adjusted.

19 A. Correct, correct.

20 Q. Okay. They never deal with the piping or --

21 A. Yeah, the pipe, no. No, we have Berkshire Mechanical for
22 that --

23 Q. Oh, okay.

24 A. -- anything gas or anything that's who --

25 Q. Got it.

- 1 A. -- we would call in over the years.
- 2 Q. Okay. You said who would do the thermostat? Who?
- 3 A. The chocolate unloader for different times of the year. He
4 would just turn it up or turn it down.
- 5 Q. Got it.
- 6 A. Yeah.
- 7 Q. Okay. If you had to -- if people had to clean around the
8 blowers or anything, did they clean around the blower?
- 9 A. No, usually that was pretty clean -- stayed pretty clean down
10 there because it was just the holding tanks down there.
- 11 Q. Right. Okay.
- 12 A. So there was never really chocolate being thrown around but,
13 yes, they may have mopped --
- 14 Q. Okay.
- 15 A. -- but there was never really any heavy -- I would call heavy
16 cleaning.
- 17 Q. Okay. Yeah. And did -- because I know they were cleaning
18 that day.
- 19 A. Yes, we were cleaning on the first floor for the changeover.
- 20 Q. Oh, only on the first floor?
- 21 A. Yes.
- 22 Q. Okay.
- 23 A. Yes, because where the rollers are that make the -- shape the
24 balls or the eggs.
- 25 Q. Okay.

1 A. So they were hosing, hosing those off --

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. -- and stuff. So, yes, all the washing was being done on the
4 first floor.

5 Q. Okay. And so the blowers is -- gas blower is on the basement
6 only?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. There's no gas blower on the first floor?

9 A. No.

10 Q. So all gas appliances, water heater and the two blowers
11 were --

12 A. Correct.

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Were you aware of any other chemicals on scene in the
16 building?

17 A. We have, we have alcohol --

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. -- and -- well, methanol alcohol and Zep (ph.). It's -- I
20 guess it would probably be considered an ethanol because it's for
21 deicing.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. But I don't know the formal name of it --

24 Q. Sure.

25 A. -- but I know it's Zep, and that's stored in two -- for the

1 alcohol and the spray, there's two fire cabinets that that stuff
2 was stored in.

3 Q. Oh, stored in two fire cabinets. Where? What floor?

4 A. On the first floor.

5 Q. First floor.

6 A. First floor right by the wash room.

7 Q. Okay.

8 MS. GUNARATNAM: That's it for me. I'll turn it over to Kim.

9 BY MS. WEST:

10 Q. Okay. Just a couple quick questions. Okay. Your schedule,
11 your normal schedule I should say.

12 A. My normal schedule is 7 to 3.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Sometimes -- I sometimes could stay over. Sometimes come in
15 early, but 7 to 3.

16 Q. That's your normal schedule?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Is that an overall schedule for like --

19 A. First shift.

20 Q. -- first shift?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Okay. The other thing I was going to talk about is -- so in
23 Building 2, just because I wasn't up in there, can I get a sense
24 of what the noise level in there is?

25 A. When we're running, the noise level is higher. It is high.

1 You do want to wear earplugs.

2 Q. You were earplugs?

3 A. Yes, yes.

4 Q. Okay. Is that true also of the first floor?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Is the noise level high enough to wear --

7 A. The noise level in the basement, it's very minimal. You
8 don't need earplugs down there, but on the first floor of
9 production --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. -- and that, yes, you need earplugs up there.

12 Q. Okay. But the basement isn't?

13 A. No, the basement's not noisy.

14 Q. Did you have pumps down there?

15 A. Yeah, there were pumps.

16 Q. They run --

17 A. Yeah, run periodically. They're not running all the time.
18 They run periodically, but they're not loud enough that I would
19 feel that it required ear protection.

20 Q. So a conversation, you would have to scream in someone's ear,
21 in the level -- floor 1?

22 A. Yes, yes.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. How about the second floor?

1 A. The second floor, no. That was cafeteria. You had a support
2 room that had the air compressors and the air conditioning units,
3 and then a little maintenance shop towards the back, but up there
4 it was not loud --

5 Q. Not loud.

6 A. -- until you went into the compressor room.

7 Q. Oh, right. Okay. Believe it or not, that's it for me.

8 Thank you.

9 MS. GUNARATNAM: She's serious with you.

10 BY MS. COOPER-SMITH?

11 Q. Do you use the breakroom in Building 1?

12 A. Building 1, yes.

13 Q. Okay. In the breakroom, is there a -- what do you call it?
14 Bulletin board.

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Are there like OSHA type posters or emergency type posters,
17 first aid type posters, on the bulletin board?

18 A. There -- well, when you first come into the building, there
19 is but in the maintenance, cafeteria that I'm referring to, where
20 I go, there's not. There's little like where the smoke detectors
21 are located, the fire alarms and stuff like that. Yes, we have
22 that stuff hanging there.

23 Q. Okay. And my last question is when you guys do a drill,
24 let's say a fire drill, and first of all, are they surprise fire
25 drills or do you know they're happening?

1 A. They are surprise.

2 Q. Okay. They're surprise fire drills.

3 A. Surprise.

4 Q. So assuming that everybody's working where they normally
5 would on the production line, you know, in the basement, what have
6 you, has it ever been recorded that there's an issue with
7 evacuating the building?

8 A. Just timewise and what they would like, but they have gotten
9 better.

10 Q. Okay. And so timewise, has anything been attributed to that
11 time issue? You know, do they know why it may have been slower or
12 faster?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Or is it just complacency or --

15 A. I would say a little of that, we're going out.

16 Q. Okay. That's all I have.

17 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Logan.

18 BY MR. SMITH:

19 Q. You mentioned safety. There is a safety committee?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. And how often do they meet?

22 A. What is it? Every -- I'm not 100 percent sure. I would say
23 every -- what is it? Every Tuesday.

24 Q. Monthly.

25 A. Yeah, monthly.

1 Q. And is there safety checks that go along with that for the
2 team and they report back on anything?

3 A. Yeah, but usually with those there, it's structural as far as
4 a foiler has a broken lip on it or there's a barrel that needs to
5 be replaced.

6 MR. SMITH: Okay. That's all I have.

7 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

8 Q. Are you on that safety committee?

9 A. No.

10 Q. Okay. Do you know who is?

11 A. On our shift, I think Joe was still and Gary --

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. -- was on the safety committee.

14 Q. Okay. So after the explosion occurred, did you hear from the
15 employees? Did you guys interact afterwards?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Okay. Did anyone talk to you about having smelled gas?

18 A. No. I just heard through --

19 Q. Right.

20 A. -- posts on, because it's been on Facebook and stuff.

21 Q. Right.

22 A. But I'm not on Facebook. I'm just hearing --

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. -- this second hand.

25 Q. Okay. Right.

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. Okay. But you hadn't smelled that whole day or that whole
3 week --

4 A. No.

5 Q. -- you had not smelled any gas. Okay.

6 A. No.

7 Q. okay. All right. Okay.

8 MS. WEST: Just one quick question.

9 MS. GUNARATNAM: Sure.

10 BY MS. WEST:

11 Q. Do you know what natural gas smells like?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. I mean do you have it in your home or --

14 A. Yes. Yes. As a kid growing up in the city --

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. -- and, yes, I know what natural gas smells like.

17 Q. And do you smoke?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. Thank you.

20 BY MS. COOPER-SMITH:

21 Q. Do you know what to do when you smell gas?

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. What do you do?

24 A. Get out.

25 MS. COOPER-SMITH: That's it.

1 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Logan?

2 MR. SMITH: I'm good.

3 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. All right. Thank you very much. I'm
4 going to end the interview right now.

5 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

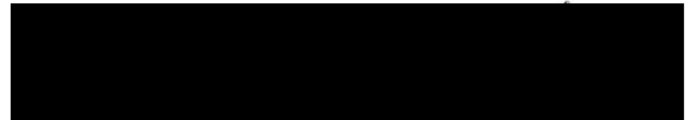
IN THE MATTER OF: EXPLOSION AT THE R.M. PALMER CANDY
 PLANT IN WEST READING,
 PENNSYLVANIA, ON MARCH 24, 2023
 Interview of Clark M. Bashore, Jr.

ACCIDENT NO.: PLD23LR002

PLACE: West Reading, Pennsylvania

DATE: April 4, 2023

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.



Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber