

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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RESIDENTIAL GAS EXPLOSION
ON SPRINGDALE LANE, MILLERSVILLE,
PENNSYLVANIA, JULY 2, 2017

Accident No.: DCA17FP006

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Interview of: ROBERT LOPEZ

UGI Offices
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Friday,
September 15, 2017

APPEARANCES:

ROGER EVANS, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

EDWARD KENDALL, Attorney
National Transportation Safety Board

TERRI COOPER SMITH, Fixed Utility Evaluation
Engineer III
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GARY MAURER, Manager, Operations Programs
UGI Utilities

ROBERT KRIEGER, Vice President of Operations
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(On behalf of Mr. Lopez)

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I N T E R V I E W

(8:20 a.m.)

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3 MR. EVANS: Good morning. Today is September 15th. It is
4 now 8:20 a.m. Eastern time. My name is Roger Evans. I'm an
5 investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board. We're
6 at the CenterPoint Offices in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Conestoga Street offices.

8 MR. EVANS: Excuse me. UGI. I'm sorry. UGI offices on
9 Calestoga -- Calstoga Street?

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Conestoga Street.

11 MR. EVANS: Conestoga Street in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

12 This interview is being conducted as part of the
13 investigation into the residential gas explosion on Springdale
14 Lane here in Millersville that occurred on July 2nd, 2017. The
15 NTSB case number for this case is DCA17FP006.

16 The purpose of the investigation is to increase safety --
17 excuse me -- not to assign fault, blame or liability. NTSB cannot
18 offer any guarantee for confidentiality or immunity from legal
19 actions.

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

24 Mr. Robert Lopez, you are permitted to have one other person
25 present during the interview. This is a person of your choice --

1 an attorney, supervisor, friend, family member -- or nobody at
2 all. Please state for the record your -- spelling of your name,
3 your job title and who you work for, and who you have selected to
4 have as your person to represent you today?

5 MR. LOPEZ: My name is Robert Lopez. It's R-o-b-e-r-t,
6 L-o-p-e-z. I'm a Mech II in construction and maintenance at UGI.
7 And the person I have to represent me today is Mr. Jaques.

8 MR. EVANS: And can you please identify yourself?

9 MR. JAQUES: Sure. Dane Jaques of Steptoe & Johnson.

10 MR. EVANS: Thank you. Let's go around the room now and have
11 everyone introduce themselves, giving the spelling of their name
12 and their entity they work for.

13 MR. KENDALL: Edward Kendall, K-e-n-d-a-l-l, NTSB, attorney.

14 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Terri Cooper-Smith; C-o-o-p-e-r and Smith,
15 S-m-i-t-h. Terri Cooper-Smith, C-o-o-p-e-r, dash,
16 S-m-i-t-h, Fixed Utility Evaluation Engineer III, with the
17 Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission.

18 MR. MAURER: Gary Maurer, M-a-u-r-e-r, Manager of Operations
19 Programs with UGI Utilities.

20 MR. KRIEGER: Robert Krieger, K-r-i-e-g-e-r, Vice President
21 of Operations, UGI Utilities.

22 MR. JAQUES: Dane Jaques, D-a-n-e, J-a-q-u-e-s, of Steptoe &
23 Johnson.

24 MR. EVANS: Thank you.

25 INTERVIEW OF ROBERT LOPEZ

1 BY MR. EVANS:

2 Q. Thanks, Rob, appreciate you coming in today and talking to
3 us. Before we begin we'd like to just get a little bit of
4 information about your education level, your background, how long
5 you've been with the company, where you worked prior to joining
6 this company; just kind of like a summary of your background
7 there.

8 A. Okay. So I've been with UGI for a little bit over 4 years
9 now. As far as educations, I do have some college. I fell short
10 of just getting my bachelor's degree. I'm not originally from
11 Lancaster, Pennsylvania. I kind of grew up in a military family
12 so I bounced around the country.

13 And is there anything else?

14 Q. Okay. So 4 years at UGI, and your current position title is
15 -- what is it again?

16 A. Mech II in C&M, and that's construction and maintenance.

17 Q. Okay. And in this 4 years you've been with UGI, have you
18 been in that position or --

19 A. No, sir.

20 Q. Can you go through that for us?

21 A. Well, we start as a Utility A, start, and then you progress
22 through Utility, a 2 year, 3 year, and then a Mech II. So every
23 year you kind of progress.

24 Q. Okay. And to get from each level what is required? You take
25 tests? Do you take classes or --

1 A. There is training, yes. In order to meet each progression
2 you have to meet a certain list of qualifications.

3 Q. Do you get -- during this initial period here, you know,
4 these years between getting up to Mech II, do you get all the --
5 exposure to all, like, reading gauges and evacuations and how to
6 address a leak and -- is that all part of that?

7 A. For the most part. It depends on the calls. Some we're
8 exposed to more and some roughly just in training at our training
9 center.

10 Q. But would you say that everyone that has this Mech II
11 qualification, that they've had some sort of formal instruction on
12 the use of LEL meters, how to evacuate a home, the steps you go
13 through to make notification, when you call 911; is that all part
14 of that?

15 A. For the most part, yes.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. As far as running leaks or investigating leaks, yes. Some
18 tasks more than others. Well, I can't really speak for everyone
19 else, but as far as I'm concerned, I've had experience in most of
20 my, I guess, my qualifications.

21 Q. So along the way your -- throughout your career, you've had
22 to do evacuations yourself?

23 A. No. I've seen them. But as far as a Mech II and being a
24 foreman, I've never had to evacuate a house before.

25 Q. Okay. Have you ever had to do an LEL meter and go in a

1 residence and look at what the gas -- if you register explosive
2 limit; you ever had to do that?

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. And when was the last time you did that?

5 A. I can't give you an exact date. I mean, it's --

6 Q. Routinely done, though, in your work? That you've done that
7 several times in your --

8 A. If we're responding to leaks, yes.

9 Q. Okay. So, but then you just told us you haven't -- never had
10 to evacuate, but you've gone in and taken the meter and say, okay,
11 where are we with regard to LEL. You just haven't had the
12 occasion to say, oh, we're at 20 percent LEL, we got to get out of
13 here? That's -- I'm not trying to put words in your mouth, but I
14 mean, is that the case, you've never -- when you say you haven't
15 had to evacuate anybody?

16 A. I was on a leak where we showed up and the fire department
17 already has the buildings evacuated, so -- I mean, I've gone in to
18 make sure that the building's safe as far as gas readings, but,
19 no, I've never had to evacuate a house.

20 Q. Okay. What is your understanding with regard to the 911
21 calls? Like the -- let's say that we have a call that starts here
22 and then, at the end, everyone's gone from the scene. But once
23 that comes in that there's a leak, what is your understanding of
24 when someone like yourself has to entertain getting the fire,
25 police people involved? When would that call be made?

1 A. Well, I'm not typically the first responder. My job is --
2 I'm the foreman, so we're typically showing up after the first
3 responder. I pinpoint the leaks and fix them.

4 Q. So let's go back to the philosophy of the first responder
5 versus, you know, your position. That first responder's going to
6 -- he's going to get the call from dispatch that says, hey, we
7 have a leak at this residence. So that person that gets that call
8 is the first responder?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Okay. Is it your understanding that that person would call
11 911?

12 A. It depends on the circumstances. If we're responding to a
13 leak and there's minimal readings and there's no threat of damage
14 to property, life, or facilities, then typically we don't get --
15 we don't dial 911. We have control of the situation. But as far
16 as calling 911, it kind of depends on a number of things.

17 Q. Okay. So just so I -- I want to just repeat this.

18 A. Okay.

19 Q. It's your understanding that there's not going to be a 911
20 call on each case?

21 A. No, sir.

22 Q. And the discretion to call 911, is that the first responder
23 all the time or could you call 911?

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. Have you called 911 before?

1 A. No sir. Not on work.

2 Q. But you could, you could make that call? Would that be in
3 concert with a discussion that you've had with the first responder
4 or would you just say, hey, we need to get someone out here?

5 A. I guess it kind of comes down to the discretion of whoever's
6 out on the jobsite. I have no problem calling 911 if I feel that
7 they need to be on-site.

8 Q. Okay. In your training as a Mech II, though, and going up
9 from Utility A all the way through, is 911 covered each year in
10 the training? Do you recall?

11 A. As far as dialing 911, we've been given the okay. But having
12 to actually call them and kind of set up training with them, no,
13 we --

14 Q. No, I meant from the standpoint of when you have your
15 training sessions each year, are they always addressing the
16 responsibility of when 911 is called and who's going to call them?
17 Is that always part of your training?

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. Okay. So, for yourself and based on your training, when you
20 go in with a meter, what is your criteria to say, okay, I have to
21 -- either I have to make a call to 911 or I have to have the first
22 responder person make this call? What is your indication, based
23 on your training, that a call should be made and evacuation should
24 occur?

25 A. Anytime we have gas inside a house or a building or if

1 there's potential for -- I guess, like I said, gas inside the
2 building or house or if there's, say, there's a fire or something.

3 Q. So is that to say that if the meter shows an LEL reading,
4 that it's time to evacuate?

5 A. It depends on the reading. Anytime it's over 20 LEL, we're
6 supposed to evacuate. Anything other, anything below that, we're
7 supposed to take certain precautions as to get the tenants out of
8 the house and not to create any hazardous -- what's the word I'm
9 looking for. Basically we don't create ignition sources or
10 whatnot.

11 Q. Um-hum. Okay. So 20 LEL -- 20 on the meter, right?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. Twenty on the meter is your actionable kind of number?

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. Where, like, no one's allowed to be around the -- when you
16 get everybody out, when it says 20?

17 A. We're not allowed to enter their house -- excuse me -- the
18 house or the building. And we --

19 Q. If you have a 20 reading?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. I see.

22 A. But we got to do everything in our power to get the tenants
23 out, whether that be yelling into the house or whatnot.

24 Q. Okay. Just to go back, though. As far as the reading that
25 you would evacuate on the LEL, what is that reading?

1 A. Twenty LEL.

2 Q. To evacuate?

3 A. I'm sorry. I didn't --

4 Q. To -- when is it -- you were saying 20 LEL was your
5 actionable kind of number, but at what point on this LEL meter do
6 you start saying, okay, people, let's get out of here?

7 A. Oh, anytime there's -- anytime I have gas readings, whether
8 it be LEL or anything, it's best just to get the tenants out of
9 the house or out of the building. Any kind of readings.

10 Q. Okay. So, if it shows up on the meter, be conservative, get
11 the people out of the building?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. Okay. So once you make this call to get people out of the
14 building, where do you send them?

15 A. That's typically up to my supervisor. I get them out of the
16 area, if it's temporary or whatnot.

17 Q. Okay. Can you describe for us your knowledge of ignition
18 sources? What types of items are ignition sources and, you know,
19 what are the things to avoid if you know there's gas in the
20 building? What are those items, then?

21 A. It could be anything as simple as your cellphone all the way
22 up to the water heater kicking off; light switches, doorbells,
23 anything with a spark.

24 Q. Okay. So once you've had this situation where you have
25 evacuated the people out of the building, at what time would you

1 make a call to have the power killed by the utility?

2 A. Anything over 20 LEL inside the building or a house.

3 Q. That's an automatic pilot type thing? You -- everyone says,
4 okay, we're above 20, we got to make the call?

5 A. And it depends on a number of other things, too. So gas
6 inside the sewer, gas readings around water mains, any kind of --
7 I mean, are GOM says 100 percent gas in the sewer and any kind of
8 readings inside the house, or 100 percent gas by the water main
9 and any kind of readings in the house. Anything over 20 LEL in
10 the house, we got to get the grid shut down.

11 Q. Okay. So the person who makes the call for the -- having the
12 grid shut down, who is that normally?

13 A. It could be anyone on-site. I can call central dispatch, the
14 first responder, basically -- well, anyone on-site from UGI.

15 Q. Okay. So have you made that kind of a call before?

16 A. No, sir.

17 Q. Have you -- do you have any experience of how long it took
18 for someone else to make that call and how long it took to bring
19 the power down?

20 A. No, sir.

21 Q. Okay. So is that something that's gone over in all the
22 training that -- each year, do you -- is that something that you
23 hear about? Shutting down the power at 20 LEL, and -- that's a
24 typical part of each year's training?

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. I would imagine there's core things that they address every
2 single year. I'm wondering if that's a core item, that's all.
3 I'm trying to figure that out.

4 A. Yes, it is. Sorry. It is taught in our training how to make
5 -- I'm sorry; it's coffee -- how to make the call and, I guess,
6 the steps to do it. We're told to contact our central dispatch to
7 have the grid shut down and then we notify the supervisor once
8 that call's been made.

9 Q. Let's talk about the pinching of pipe versus excavating. I
10 mean, excavating and pinching versus shutting a valve in the local
11 area.

12 When you -- in your training, like the core item I'm talking
13 about that they -- something that gets covered every year, do they
14 talk about how to, you know, if you have a pretty substantial leak
15 at first; you know, you're getting readings like crazy, way up
16 there, bar hole testing's saying, hey, we've got gas all over
17 here, the decision to close the valve versus pinch a line -- like
18 I know in this neighborhood there was a valve and I think there
19 was -- we've talked about that a lot through the interviews. But
20 is that something that's part of the core training, where they
21 say, if you have a bad leak you can make the decision to close the
22 valve that goes to the area or you can maybe excavate and pinch?

23 A. No, we've been told to close valves if we need to. It kind
24 of depends on the situation: where the valve's located, how many
25 valves are needed to shut down the area, versus where we're

1 digging to squeeze off the main. Do we need two squeeze-off
2 points; do we need one? It kind of depends on a number of
3 factors.

4 Q. Okay. Different line of questioning, let's say. So I
5 understand -- we were told that there are some memory issues with
6 this whole situation with you. We respect that 110 percent and,
7 again, we don't want you to guess and we don't want you to -- if
8 you don't know, you don't know.

9 A. Okay.

10 Q. Before you arrived on scene, do you have a recall of the
11 conversations that went through the radio or dispatch or whatever?
12 Do you have any recall of that?

13 A. I do have -- prior to me leaving the shop to head out to the
14 scene, yes, I, for the most part, have recollection of those phone
15 calls.

16 Q. Okay. Do you recall any times, timestamps that you could
17 give us as far as when you received calls?

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. Who those call were from and --

20 A. I did bring my phone so I do have all the calls that I made
21 and that I received.

22 Q. Okay.

23 (Off the record.)

24 (On the record.)

25 BY MR. EVANS:

1 Q. So, Rob, we understand you have your telephone and your
2 telephone has -- with you, and you can go down the timestamps and
3 give us a rundown of the calls you made or calls received and who
4 they were from and the nature of the call. Could you describe all
5 that for us?

6 A. At 11:23, I received a call from Jason Trimble, the duty
7 supervisor. That was roughly -- well, it says 1 minute and 9
8 seconds. And that call was basically to inform me that there was
9 a gas leak and that he was calling out duty crew to go out and fix
10 it. And he gave me the location and he told me that it was
11 possibly a mechanical punch and tee leaking and to be prepared for
12 that.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. And then after that, I received -- well, I had a missed call
15 from Richard Boudier at 11:32.

16 Right afterwards, I called him back and that was at 11:33.
17 And that was 1 minute, 55 seconds. And that was basically him to
18 kind of confirm the address where I was going, and he wanted to
19 confirm that I was the duty foreman and who else was coming out.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. Then I had a call from Jason Trimble at 11:42, which was 1
22 minute and 41 seconds long. That was to ask me if I heard from
23 our operator, Norm Chancy, because he was having trouble getting
24 ahold of him, and he wasn't sure if I had spoke to Norm or not.
25 And then -- which I hadn't. I couldn't get ahold of Norm. Or he

1 didn't try to contact me.

2 Then I had another call from Jason at 11:52, was basically to
3 tell me that he found a backup for Norm, someone to replace him,
4 to come out and operate for me and that it was going to be Jessie
5 Ressler.

6 Q. Can you spell that name, Jessie Ressler, please?

7 A. It's -- first name is J-e-s-s-i-e, last name is
8 R-e-s-s-l-e-r.

9 After the call from Jason, I received a call from Jessie.
10 That was about 2 minutes and 25 seconds long, at 12:09, and that
11 was basically a formality. Jessie wasn't on call that weekend so
12 he was calling me to tell me that, hey, I got to get home, get my
13 work stuff and come back, then I'll head into the shop.

14 And I instructed Jessie that my -- well, at the time, my
15 laborer was Kenny Henry. He was going to drive the dump truck,
16 but I told Kenny to bring the backhoe out. And so when Jessie
17 called me, I told Jessie, hey, look we got the backhoe coming out;
18 I need you to bring an empty dump truck so that we could have it
19 on-site.

20 Q. And can you please spell Kenny Henry's -- that's K-e-n-n-y, I
21 guess, and --

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. -- H-e-n-r-y?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Okay. Thank you.

1 A. Well, let me confirm. What's his last name? Yes, H-e-n-r-y.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. And then I didn't receive a call until after the explosion,
4 and I have a number of missed calls after that. Did you want me
5 to go through them?

6 Q. No, that's okay.

7 A. Okay.

8 Q. Yeah, you were there. So that is your recall from -- up to
9 the point where you left to go to the site?

10 A. After I spoke with Jessie, yeah, I don't remember anything
11 after leaving the shop, the grounds here.

12 Q. Any recall of the -- being evacuated or any of that stuff?

13 A. No, sir.

14 Q. And you had -- I guess you had a head injury, correct?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Okay. So the person that -- and you say you were the -- on
17 the duty crew, right?

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. So describe that for us. On that day, is it just for 1 day
20 that you have the duty or is it a weekend or is it for multiple
21 days? How does that work?

22 A. It's multiple days. Our duty crew schedule runs from Friday
23 to Thursday, 24 hours.

24 Q. Oh, so you're on call all that time?

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. Twenty-four hours. So if anything happens, they can --

2 A. We do have our regular shift, 7 to 3, and typically we don't
3 -- they don't call duty out during those hours. But after hours,
4 roughly like 3, 3:30, then we go on call until the following day.

5 Q. And just curious, is the -- is when you're on duty, is it --
6 are you typically left alone or not typically left alone?

7 A. No, we have our crew and -- yeah, I have the operator and the
8 laborer, so I'm not alone.

9 Q. As far as the frequency of calls during this Friday and
10 Thursday thing, is that -- do you always get calls when you're on
11 duty?

12 A. No.

13 Q. You could have a whole week of duty and not --

14 A. Get called out once.

15 Q. -- not get called out once. Okay.

16 So on the day of the incident when you have a duty group, I
17 guess is what it's called, right?

18 A. Duty crew.

19 Q. Duty crew, excuse me. So you have a duty crew and you -- can
20 you go through that again, the names and the positions of those
21 people that would be on duty with you on that?

22 A. Well, the crews vary week from week.

23 Q. But for the week that, of the --

24 A. Okay.

25 Q. -- event, yeah.

1 A. The duty crew was me, myself, I was the duty foreman.

2 Q. Right.

3 A. Then I have a duty operator, who was Norm Chancy. He's our
4 operator for the backhoe. And then I have a duty laborer who
5 typically drives the dump truck, and that was Kenny Henry.

6 Q. And that's it, then? That's the whole --

7 A. Well, then we had the first responder, which was Richard
8 Bouder. But usually, yeah, he's not there the entire time
9 typically.

10 Q. I see. So for this duty crew, is there always a person who
11 gets assigned the role of first responder?

12 A. Yes. There's sign-ups just like duty crew. I mean, there's
13 a calendar downstairs as to who has what week and the positions.
14 Same with the first responder.

15 Q. So what is your understanding if the -- you know, let's just
16 say you take duty and then something comes up and, I don't know,
17 your wife's going through labor or something and -- early and now
18 you can't go. What's the procedure there?

19 A. There's -- it kind of depends on the situation. Are you
20 talking personally for me, or -- I can't really speak for the
21 other guys, but --

22 Q. Let's hear what -- personally for you.

23 A. If something comes up, like an emergency?

24 Q. Yes.

25 A. Well, I typically -- well, my -- I'm still supposed to

1 respond to leaks, but if there's an emergency, I will contact the
2 duty supervisor to inform him. And typically I'll try to find
3 someone who will relieve me, and if I can't, then I -- the duty
4 supervisor can. Just because that's me, not -- I can't speak for
5 the, like I said, the other guys. But if something came up for
6 me, I'll typically let the duty supervisor know what's happened
7 and then I'll tell him, hey, I'm going to call around and try to
8 get someone to cover for me. And if I can't, then I'll let the
9 duty supervisor know. But my primary role is to respond to the
10 leaks and --

11 Q. Right. So is there any sort of a auto callback? If you
12 don't answer that call, does it ring again in 5 minutes or 10
13 minutes or something?

14 A. Oh, for duty, yes. The supervisor will continue to keep
15 calling you until --

16 Q. Until you answer.

17 A. -- he gets ahold of someone, yes.

18 Q. Until you get ahold of someone. Okay. So that -- if you
19 were at a movie or something and you had your cell phone off and
20 you came out, you might see six missed calls or something?

21 A. Oh, no. I do not go to movies while I'm on call.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. We have a time frame of when we're supposed to respond, and
24 me and my wife have an understanding that when I'm on call, I'm in
25 the house and my phone is glued to my hip.

1 Q. Okay. And in your career in this 4 years plus with the --
2 with UGI, have you had occasions when you went on a call and
3 someone that was supposed to be there didn't show up? Where they
4 -- you know, he wasn't Mr. Conscientious and he just -- he didn't
5 answer his phone and now you're one guy short? Has that happened
6 in your 4-year career?

7 A. Other than the day that it -- or the day of the event.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. It happened once, and it was just due to a miscommunication.
10 But it wasn't due to negligence or --

11 Q. Right.

12 A. But that was the only other event.

13 Q. Yeah. Okay. Going back to the training and -- I know you, I
14 know you were out a while with your accident and all that, your
15 injury and stuff. Did they do a -- did you have like a lessons
16 learned kind of session once all this was all -- you know, you
17 came back to work? Have you heard anything about any of the
18 details of what not to do next time? Did you get any lessons
19 learned, any sort of like, hey, if you're ever out there and you
20 have this situation, we don't want you to do this; we want you
21 to -- did you get anything like that?

22 A. Well, I've only been back to work -- this week was my first
23 week, and I'm only here for half-days for the time being. So I
24 don't think there's been an opportunity to do training.

25 Q. To talk to you about that stuff?

1 A. No, I -- I mean, I don't really want to talk about the event
2 and know the know-hows until after our -- the meetings were
3 concluded, because I've read online the events and the
4 investigation's going on and whatnot, and I -- it's kind of like
5 fuzzy and I --

6 Q. You want to keep it out of you mind?

7 A. Yes, sir. I want to keep the facts in my head and not assume
8 to know what happened and --

9 Q. Right. Okay. And I can see why it would be polite to not --
10 for your company not to, you know, delve into this especially
11 since you've had that head injury and stuff, so -- okay.

12 MR. EVANS: I think that's all I have for right now.

13 MR. KENDALL: Edward Kendall, NTSB. I just have a few
14 questions.

15 BY MR. KENDALL:

16 Q. You said when you spoke to Jason, I believe, that he informed
17 you there was a potential mechanical punching tee issue?

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. Is that something you have dealt with before?

20 A. Yes. In previous leaks throughout my term of -- or I guess
21 my employment here at UGI.

22 Q. Okay. And so when he told you there might be a mechanical
23 punching tee, what did that mean to you?

24 A. Well, my first thought was that we might have to cut in a new
25 tee. My thoughts, you know, that's pretty much what it was when

1 he told me. I kind of had -- it gave me an idea of what tools I
2 might need on the job.

3 Q. Okay. And those tools were something you had in your truck?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Okay. In --

6 A. Some of the tools I needed to get, are kept here in the shop.
7 So it was just a matter of grabbing them and putting them in the
8 truck and heading out.

9 Q. And did you drive the backhoe out or did Kenny drive the
10 backhoe out?

11 A. Kenny Henry did.

12 Q. So what vehicle did you drive to the scene?

13 A. I had the street truck.

14 Q. Can you describe what the responsibilities of a foreman are?

15 A. There's a number of things.

16 Q. Sure. I can narrow it down. What are the responsibilities
17 of the duty foreman?

18 A. Okay. So I'm in charge of the crew, make sure procedures
19 and -- are getting followed, and pinpointing leaks, making sure
20 the paperwork gets done. Safety's a priority. I mean, there's a
21 number of things.

22 Q. During your normal workweek are you a foreman as well?

23 A. Yes, for the most part. They kind of -- it depends on the
24 workload. If they need me to go out and locate, I will, but a
25 majority of that time I am a foreman.

1 Q. And had you been a foreman basically the entire time you've
2 been a Mech II? Is that kind of how it works?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Okay. And what are the specific responsibilities of Mech II?

5 A. The qualifications, the -- are quite --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. I mean, we have a huge list of qualifications.

8 Q. Sure. So I guess on the day that you were serving as the
9 Mech II duty foreman for this incident at issue, what did it mean
10 that you were the Mech II versus being the laborer or the
11 operator?

12 A. Typically, in a nutshell, the laborer's in charge of driving
13 the dump truck, helping out. They have a number of things they
14 have to do as well, but --

15 Our operator's in charge of, basically, the backhoe and
16 digging the holes. But once the holes are dug, then he's
17 typically helping out as well.

18 Duty foreman, for me it was making sure we have the necessary
19 tools, making the fixes. Like I said, safety, procedures are
20 being followed.

21 Q. So I think it was Norm that didn't answer as the operator.
22 As a Mech II, could you have also operated the backhoe?

23 A. Yes. But I didn't have the ability to because I can't drive
24 the street truck and the backhoe out to the job.

25 Q. Right. So you need -- no matter what, you need someone else?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Okay. In prior interviews we've discussed kind of the
3 classification of leaks as being A, B or C leak.

4 A. Um-hum.

5 Q. Could you just tell me what that means?

6 A. Well, C leaks are priority. The classifications are -- I
7 mean, there's a number of classifications, but A leaks being the
8 least serious of them all, B being like --

9 Q. Okay. And was, to your knowledge -- I know there's some
10 memory issues. Do you remember what classification this leak was
11 when you first dispatched?

12 A. It was a C leak.

13 MR. KENDALL: Okay. I think that's all the questions I have
14 for now. Thank you.

15 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Terri Cooper-Smith, PUC.

16 BY MS. COOPER-SMITH:

17 Q. I just want to kind of get an exact time here. I don't know
18 if you can get it exact, but at what point -- what was the very
19 last thing you remember?

20 A. Driving out the gate in the street truck. The gate being --

21 Q. The gate here?

22 A. Yes, ma'am.

23 Q. Okay. And the very last conversation you had with Jason was
24 that he had a backup for Norman?

25 A. Yes, ma'am.

1 Q. And that was Jessie --

2 A. Ressler.

3 Q. Ressler.

4 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Okay. That's all I have.

5 MR. MAURER: Gary Maurer, UGI. No questions.

6 BY MR. KRIEGER:

7 Q. One -- the only question I have is a timeline-related one.

8 12:09 you said you received a call from Jessie?

9 A. I believe so.

10 Q. And that he was heading into the shop. Is that the last call
11 you had?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. I just wanted to make sure.

14 A. Well, that's the last call I -- that's the last person I
15 spoke to that I can remember that day.

16 Q. And then, as the foreman of the crew, typically -- you know,
17 you talked about some of the activities. Are you responsible
18 overall for overseeing the repair activity that occurs?

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. Okay. And kind of in that role, you're -- you would then be
21 providing direction to the foreman -- or to the laborer and the
22 operator in the course of doing that activity?

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 MR. KRIEGER: Okay. That's the only question I have.

25 MR. EVANS: Yes. Just a few other questions.

1 BY MR. EVANS:

2 Q. When you are going to -- this is Roger Evans -- when you're
3 going to address a C leak and you know that when you're en route
4 to a C leak, can you go through all the steps in your -- you know,
5 that you're going to be thinking about?

6 So when you get there, do you have a checklist or do you have
7 -- you know, what steps you would go through before -- you know,
8 once you get out of the truck, what are you going to do?

9 A. Some of them are routine but it depends on the nature of the
10 leak. Not all of them are the same. But as far as the routine
11 stuff, it's -- I'm not thinking about it, it just happens when I
12 get out to the jobsite.

13 Q. Well, let's just go to, let's say, a C leak and you know the
14 C leak is a smell in a home. The odor's in the home. Tell us
15 what you would do from the moment you get out of the truck and go
16 forward with that.

17 A. You're saying, it's just -- there's just gas in the house?
18 Is that what you're saying?

19 Q. Yes.

20 A. Well, typically, I don't -- I'm not the first one there. The
21 first responder usually is the first one there. But if I get
22 there and there's gas into the house, I'd ask the first responder
23 if he's evacuated; is the area safe? On duty, we're not the first
24 ones on-site to, I guess, check the houses and try to pinpoint
25 inside leaks.

1 Q. But as your role as a duty person, you would never be a first
2 responder?

3 A. No. My purpose is to, like I said, run the crew, show up and
4 repair the leaks.

5 Q. So the decision that one would make to excavate by hand and
6 do a pinch, where did that -- where does that decision come from?

7 A. It can come from the duty supervisor; it can come from me.
8 Usually I -- well, I try to beat the rest of the crew out there,
9 but if it came down to -- well, typically -- I had all the
10 equipment on my truck, so it either comes from me or the duty
11 supervisor.

12 Q. Okay. And when you make a decision, though, to pinch a line,
13 what's the basis to say, okay, we're going to have to pinch it?
14 You know, what brought you to that decision, normally; in any
15 case?

16 A. Well, it depends on a number of factors. Are we talking is
17 -- their house is affected, where the area is, other utilities,
18 what kind of readings we're getting, where valves are located. It
19 -- I mean, it depends on the situation.

20 Q. But going back to -- do we have a timestamp for your arrival
21 on the scene?

22 A. I'm not sure. I don't remember. On the timeline, I think
23 there should be something on the timeline (indiscernible).

24 Q. Okay. I can look at it later. I was just curious.

25 A. Yeah, we'd have to look at the timeline to be sure.

1 Q. Okay. So you're saying the decision to pinch a line, a lot
2 of factors go into it. And I know you can't recall this
3 particular one, but -- so we'll go from there. Different
4 question.

5 Have you ever -- have you had a chance to work with the first
6 responder on a lot of these cases in the past?

7 A. I've worked with them on jobs, yes.

8 Q. But as -- with him as the first responder role?

9 A. Yes, but not as -- I wasn't the foreman. I was typically the
10 operator or laborer.

11 Q. Is it -- I mean, just based on your history of working with
12 this person, was his approach to these things like -- was he like
13 a super conservative guy, you know, with regard to playing by the
14 book or playing, you know, kind of like -- can you give us any
15 idea of how he would compare with other people you work with that
16 do this kind of work?

17 A. You're talking about Ricky Boudier?

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. Ricky wasn't lax. He was gung-ho. I mean, I trust him.
20 He's -- he wouldn't allow anyone to get hurt or any co-workers to
21 get hurt, and he knew his stuff.

22 Q. Okay. Have you ever had an instance where you went on a
23 scene and Ricky removed a meter from a -- on a leak? Where the
24 meter was actually removed from the home?

25 A. Have I ever been on a leak where he removed a meter?

1 Q. Yes.

2 A. I couldn't recall. I mean, I've been on so many leaks during
3 my time here, I --

4 Q. Okay. Well, let's take Ricky out of the question and say,
5 the removal of a meter when you address a leak, has that been
6 something that you've seen in the past?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. And can you give us a thumbnail discussion of why one would
9 do that?

10 A. If you have gas readings in a house, it's kind of like a
11 fail-safe. You turn off the riser valve; there's still a
12 possibility that that valve could fail, and then you'd have gas
13 still seeping into the house. So removing the meter would be a
14 fail-safe to make sure that, if that valve were to fail, that gas
15 isn't entering the house and it's venting into the atmosphere
16 outside. So that, that's where I've seen that.

17 Q. And is that a practice that they teach in this -- in your
18 training? In those 4 years you've been here, have you seen that
19 as a viable method to alleviate, you know, some of the risk by
20 removing a meter?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. That is taught?

23 A. I couldn't tell you if it, verbatim, but, yes, that's
24 something we do in the field just -- I mean, if we can take a
25 precaution, then we're going to do it.

1 Q. So in the eyes of the average person who does what you do,
2 they see the removal of the meter as a safety precaution to
3 minimize risk?

4 A. It -- depending on a situation. If there's gas in the house
5 and we can't figure out how it's getting in there, yes.

6 MR. EVANS: Okay. I think that's all I have.

7 MR. KENDALL: Edward Kendall, NTSB. I just have one
8 question.

9 BY MR. KENDALL:

10 Q. Who's your supervisor in C&M?

11 A. Right now? Or typically?

12 Q. Or at the time of the accident, I guess.

13 A. Duty super was Jason Trimble and he's also my supervisor
14 during regular hours.

15 MR. KENDALL: Okay. That's all I have. Thank you.

16 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Terri Cooper-Smith. No questions.

17 MR. MAURER: Gary Maurer. No questions.

18 MR. KRIEGER: Bob Krieger. No questions.

19 MR. EVANS: Okay. This concludes the interview.

20 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)
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22
23
24
25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

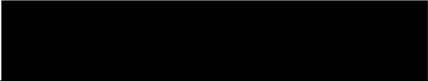
IN THE MATTER OF: RESIDENTIAL GAS EXPLOSION
 ON SPRINGDALE LANE, MILLERSVILLE,
 PENNSYLVANIA, JULY 2, 2017
 Interview of Robert Lopez

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA17FP006

PLACE: Millersville, Pennsylvania

DATE: September 15, 2017

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



Sharon A. Estes
Transcriber