

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,  
PENNSYLVANIA, ON MARCH 24, 2023

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Accident No.: PLD23FR002

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Interview of: WILLIAM T. RUNYEON, Chocolate Unloader  
R.M. Palmer Company

Wyomissing, 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. Runyeon

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I N T E R V I E W

(5:31 p.m.)

1 MS. GUNARATNAM: All right. Good afternoon, my name is  
2 Rachael Gunaratnam, I'm a hazmat investigator with the National  
3 Transportation Safety Board out of Washington, D.C. Today is  
4 April 4th and the time is 5:31 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. We are  
5 currently at the R.M. Palmer facility on 700 (sic) Van Reed. We  
6 are here in response to the natural gas incident that occurred on  
7 March 24th, 2023, in West Reading, Pennsylvania. Today we are  
8 interviewing --

9 MR. RUNYEON: William Thomas Runyeon.

10 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay, could you spell that for us?

11 MR. RUNYEON: The whole thing?

12 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yes.

13 MR. RUNYEON: All right. Oh, oh, into this, right.

14 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah.

15 MR. RUNYEON: W-i-l-l-i-a-m T-h-o-m-a-s R-u-n-y-e-o-n.

16 MS. GUNARATNAM: Do you go by --

17 MR. RUNYEON: Will.

18 MS. GUNARATNAM: Will, okay. All right. And you're free to  
19 have a representative to consult with during the interview. Is  
20 there anyone --

21 MR. RUNYEON: Yes, Corey.

22 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay, great. Thank you.

23 MR. WRIGHT: Wright.

1 MR. RUNYEON: Corey Wright.

2 MS. GUNARATNAM: Can you just spell that real quick?

3 MR. WRIGHT: Sure. C-o-r-e-y W-r-i-g-h-t.

4 MS. GUNARATNAM: Thanks. So just so you know, the purpose of  
5 this investigation is a safety investigation and we're here to  
6 improve safety and not to assign fault or blame or liability. Our  
7 sole mission is to try to prevent this from happening again. The  
8 NTSB, however, cannot offer any guarantee of confidentiality or  
9 immunity from any legal proceedings by other agencies, whether  
10 local, state, or federal. And a transcript of this interview will  
11 be placed on our public docket for this investigation, which will  
12 be on our website. That's after you've reviewed it. So I'll just  
13 go around the room real quick. To my left.

14 MS. WEST: I'm Kim West, I'm the investigator in charge, with  
15 the National Transportation Safety Board.

16 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Hi, I'm Terri Cooper-Smith. I am a  
17 pipeline safety supervisor for the Pennsylvania Public Utility  
18 Commission.

19 MR. GARLAND: Richard Garland, I'm an investigator with the  
20 U.S. Department of Labor, OSHA.

21 MR. SMITH: Logan Smith, Palmer representative, Vice  
22 President of Operations.

23 INTERVIEW OF WILLIAM T. RUNYEON

24 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

25 Q. Okay, great. So if we could just start with your background,

1 your title, how long you've been with the company, and your duties  
2 and that kind of thing.

3 A. I've been working at Palmer since, I think, January 9th,  
4 2012. I'm the chocolate unloader. Or I was.

5 Q. What do you currently do?

6 A. I don't know yet. I'm sort of on -- I'm working with the  
7 unloaders over here right now.

8 Q. Okay, got it. And what building did you work in?

9 A. One and two.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Because I unloaded into both buildings.

12 Q. And did you work a particular shift?

13 A. Second shift.

14 Q. Okay. That was your shift for a while?

15 A. The whole time I was there.

16 Q. Okay, great. Okay. So what are your duties as a chocolate  
17 unloader?

18 A. To make sure that the tanker is going to fit in the specified  
19 tank; to make sure that it is the correct product; to make sure  
20 that the seal numbers, the tanker number and the -- and the cab  
21 number all match the carrier bill of lading; that the manufacturer  
22 bill of lading and its order number match in our system; that I am  
23 responsible for, or was responsible for testing the viscosity of  
24 the product, its taste, smell, and -- taste, smell and odor,  
25 that's the same thing. I'm responsible for checking the fineness,

1 the granular-ness of the product, and there's a whole --

2 Q. Right.

3 A. Do you want me to run through the process or --

4 Q. Not right now, that's okay. When you say tanker fits into  
5 the specified tank, can you explain that part?

6 A. The tankers from -- each tank holds, you know, a certain  
7 amount of chocolate.

8 Q. Melted chocolate?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. Lines will pull from the tanks and according to the rate of  
12 pull versus the arrival of the tanker time will tell me when the  
13 product, the coating, would be able to fit. The empty space in  
14 the tank is subtracted from the total space to tell you if the  
15 amount is going to fit in there and my job was to make sure that  
16 happened, in coordination with the line techs and everyone else.

17 Q. Okay. And so this is when there's a delivery from a truck --

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. -- delivering liquid chocolate --

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. -- and you're making sure it can fit into the tanks in the  
22 building?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Okay. All right. And so you determine kind of volumes and  
25 everything to make sure there's no over -- have you ever had an

1 overfilling issue or --

2 A. Not personally.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Not personally.

5 Q. Yeah, good. Then you said you look at seal number and tank  
6 number just to make sure they all match up?

7 A. Yeah, I taste the product and --

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. Okay. When you talked about process, you're referring to the  
11 -- what you just talked about, the --

12 A. Yeah, the sequence of events required to confirm the correct  
13 product has arrived --

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. -- and to put it in the correct tank or tanks.

16 Q. Got it, okay. All right, great. So if we could start with  
17 on the day of the accident, can you tell us -- walk us through  
18 your day, you know, when you first arrived, where you parked  
19 and --

20 A. Normally, I try to show up to work an hour, half an hour  
21 early, I like to eat breakfast at work and check everything out.  
22 I parked in the employee parking lot near, I guess, what used to  
23 be Building 5. I'm not sure what time I got there that day, but I  
24 know I punched in at 2:53 because I -- excuse me, I almost always  
25 punch in at 2:53 and I'm -- I think that was one of those days.



1 Normally, the first thing I do is go and take inventory of all of  
2 the tanks, but that day I had to run a viscometer calibration  
3 test, so I believe that was run and completed by 3:30, at which  
4 point I -- then I did the tank inventory of all nine of our -- of  
5 our tanks, Tanks 1 through 7 being in Building 2, and 8 and 9  
6 being in Building 1. I would do them Building 1 to 2, as I  
7 started in Building 1.

8 The tanker was scheduled for 4:30 p.m., the Palmer standard  
9 compound. It was 48,000 pounds. I knew that I would have to --  
10 it would not fit in the -- in the tank completely, I would have to  
11 put 4,000 pounds into Tank 4 in Building 2. So once the tanker  
12 had arrived at 4 o'clock -- do you want me to go through the  
13 entire --

14 Q. Yes.

15 A. -- setup process? So once the tanker arrived, I spoke with  
16 the driver, I got his paperwork, I checked his seals, I --  
17 confirming the seals were correct. I brought down the harness, I  
18 broke the seal on the rear, I went into Building 1 to get a bungee  
19 cord to hold open the rear of the tanker. I then went back inside  
20 Building 1 to get a 90-degree unloading pipe, which was then  
21 attached to the rear of the tanker.

22 At that point the driver and I, Mark Baxter, went into  
23 Building 1. That door is also held open with a bungee. We got  
24 the unloading hose, took the unloading hose out the door and  
25 attached it to the inlet on the inside of the building and I

1 attached the hose, the tube, to the 90-degree unloading pipe, at  
2 which point the pipe was -- the tube was braced and at that point  
3 we were all set for the unloading part of the operation.

4 Q. That's the setup, and then --

5 A. That is the initial setup process.

6 Q. And then how does it then get out of the truck?

7 A. So after that, at some point, I put a screen in there, I'm  
8 not sure when I did that, but there was a screen placed at some  
9 point in that --

10 Q. Where?

11 A. -- sequence in the operation. The tube, which connects to  
12 the outlet, leads to a screen housing which then goes to the  
13 unloading pump, which leads to a vertical pipe, which would go up  
14 to Tank 9.

15 Q. Tank 9 in Building Number 1?

16 A. Building Number 1.

17 Q. Got it. Okay, so that was filling.

18 A. So once all that was done, I opened the rear of the tanker  
19 with a spin valve, I got my sample, I went -- I went into the  
20 building, I usually chat with Mark about nonsense for a little  
21 bit. I went in and I got my samples, spun my twirl bags, we fill  
22 up these plastic bags for lab samples, spin them around, that's  
23 why they're called twirl bags, and put them together and put that  
24 in the freezer in Building 1, in the lab. I went, and at this  
25 point the tanker is already running, I've opened up the valve,

1 I've hit the -- I've hit the pump, I -- let's see here. Samples  
2 in the fridge. I went and I cleaned out the chocolate pail, put  
3 that back in there, and I had some more things to clean but I had  
4 to go over to Building 2 because the tanker was not going to fit,  
5 because I had to do a changeover, I had to change the direction of  
6 the pipes so that this compound chocolate would go into Tank 4.  
7 So I go over to Building 2 and I change the direction of the  
8 pipes, I go and I check Tank 4 and the -- the tank was closed,  
9 they had not pulled anything.

10 Mike was going to fit anyway, but you know, I check on  
11 production and things like that and so I went up to -- up to Line  
12 6 in Building 2 and I talked to Xiomara (ph.) and I asked her what  
13 their startup time was, what they thought they were doing, and I  
14 think they said they were switching from eggs to balls. And then  
15 I went back into Building 1 and that's when everything happened,  
16 at some point after I got back into Building 1. Shortly  
17 thereafter.

18 Q. Okay. So just to back up a little bit, you spoke to Xiomara  
19 in Building 2.

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. She was telling you the changeover to eggs to balls.

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Okay. And then as you were walking back into Building Number  
24 1, the explosion happened?

25 A. No, I was already inside.

1 Q. Inside already.

2 A. I was already inside Building Number 1, I -- I think I went  
3 through the lab, I'm not sure if I had to clean a few other  
4 things, everything kind of gets blurry in that little block, but  
5 once I had gone back into Building 1 and through the lab, I walked  
6 up towards my unloading computer and as -- about the time I got up  
7 there is when everything exploded.

8 Q. And that unloading computer is on the first floor of Building  
9 Number 1?

10 A. I think it's technically the basement.

11 Q. The basement.

12 A. The first floor would've been maintenance, which was above  
13 us.

14 Q. Oh, okay. So you -- okay. I see. You were in front of the  
15 unloading computer in the basement when the explosion --

16 A. No, I was -- see -- right when everything -- when everything  
17 happened, I was standing about at that corner.

18 Q. Okay. And that is facing Cherry Street?

19 A. Yeah, I kind of would've been like this, because when the  
20 explosion hit, I turned to my left.

21 Q. Your left, okay. And did you end up falling over?

22 A. No. Do you want the whole sequence from the explosion on?

23 Q. Yes.

24 A. All right. So everything that went through my head in  
25 sequence here. One, the first thing I heard was it sounded like

1 the same sort of sound you would hear from a skid dropping on the  
2 above floor and -- and --

3 Q. It's okay.

4 MS. WEST: Take your time.

5 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah, if you need a break.

6 MR. RUNYEON: Sorry.

7 MS. GUNARATNAM: If it's too hard, you don't have to talk  
8 about it.

9 MR. RUNYEON: Oh, my gosh.

10 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.

11 (Pause.)

12 MR. RUNYEON: And the -- after that --

13 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

14 Q. You heard like the sound of a skid dropping.

15 A. That exact sound, so that was the first thing that went  
16 through my mind, and as I turned to my left, I think I turned to  
17 my left because I saw Anna running out of Line 8 to run to the  
18 phone and I was what's going -- did somebody drop something up  
19 there, what's going on?

20 And the whole ceiling undulated and dust fell down for the  
21 length of it, and it was funny because I swear it covered me, but  
22 by the time I got outside I don't remember being covered in dust.  
23 And Anna says, over the phone, that there's a fire and I start  
24 running towards Line 8 briefly because I figured I'll grab the  
25 fire extinguisher, but before I can get there, I can see

1 everything's getting cloudy and I know we just got to get out of  
2 there. So she's already gone and I'm running back and I run  
3 through the hot room, nothing, nothing seemed like there was a  
4 problem there, I heard later the wall buckled, but I didn't see  
5 anything funny there. I hit the pump, I killed the pump because I  
6 knew if I didn't, the room would've filled with chocolate because  
7 I didn't know what happened out there yet. I speculated, you  
8 know, a compressor blew, you know, that was one of the things  
9 going around initially, which of course wouldn't make sense given  
10 the positions of things, but --

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. And I run out through the lab and out through the -- through  
13 the front door and into the parking lot with everyone else.

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. And that's that.

16 Q. Yeah, that's horrible. Did you recognize that it was an  
17 explosion or --

18 A. The nature and the sound of it, oh, the elevator rattled,  
19 that was another thing. About the time I had -- I was -- I had  
20 gotten near Anna going at the line before I realized it was time  
21 to get out of there, I heard the whole shaft and everything shake  
22 and I -- that was the second other thought that went through my  
23 head, I thought oh, maybe the elevator collapsed. But once we got  
24 outside and got into the parking lot and saw the smoke, I figured  
25 out, well, maybe it was the compressor, that makes sense because I

1 thought it was coming from our roof at first. And then everyone  
2 else came out and we heard about Building 2 and that was that.

3 Q. Yeah. Okay. So when you said the -- you and Anna went out  
4 together?

5 A. No, no, I didn't see her, I think the first person I saw when  
6 I went out was Joanna.

7 Q. Joanna.

8 A. She was a mess and I didn't really understand why. Now I  
9 know why.

10 Q. Yeah. So when you said you went to a parking lot, which one  
11 did you go to?

12 A. The employee parking lot.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Where Building 5 is across the street.

15 Q. Okay. Okay, yeah. So you hadn't seen Building 2 when you  
16 first evacuated, right?

17 A. Not yet, no, no.

18 Q. Okay. And you stayed there --

19 A. I stayed at the rallying point until, I think -- yeah, I  
20 guess 6 o'clock.

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. Something like that. I know we spoke to an officer who did a  
23 head count.

24 Q. Okay. Yeah. Did you talk to Anna afterwards?

25 A. Yeah, briefly, in the parking lot. I think it was just about

1 what I thought was going on initially and that was it, she walked  
2 off into the crowd and I think I -- I don't remember who I talked  
3 to after that.

4 Q. I was just wondering, did she observe anything while she was  
5 in that room with you, right?

6 A. She was in that hallway corner there.

7 Q. Because I'm just wondering, when you were there, did you  
8 smell gas?

9 A. No.

10 Q. Okay. Did she report anything to you?

11 A. No. I don't think -- I definitely didn't smell anything and  
12 I don't recall her saying any different.

13 Q. Okay. And did she have any -- when you talked to her  
14 afterwards, she didn't say anything, observations she may have  
15 seen before --

16 A. No.

17 Q. -- before it -- okay. Okay. Okay, so I understand that you  
18 -- right, okay, so let's back up to the night before. Were you --  
19 sorry, were you working Monday through Friday?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Okay. In shift number two.

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. Full time, right? So the day before, did you smell any gas?

24 A. At the junction near the boiler house in the road, briefly, I  
25 thought I smelled gas.



- 1 Q. Okay. And what time was that around?
- 2 A. Eight o'clock.
- 3 Q. Eight p.m., okay.
- 4 A. I don't remember.
- 5 Q. All right. And did you tell anyone?
- 6 A. Maintenance.
- 7 Q. And who is maintenance?
- 8 A. I think that would've been Jose and Mike Breedy.
- 9 Q. Okay. Okay. Did you walk with them to go investigate or --
- 10 A. The first thing I did was check the seven seals at the meter,
- 11 standard operating procedure, water around the circumference of
- 12 the seal to check for air leaks, bubbles, look at the meter to see
- 13 if it's rolling. I did not see either and I reported both to
- 14 maintenance.
- 15 Q. Oh, okay, so you smelled it and you went ahead and did a soap
- 16 check?
- 17 A. And then I reported it upstairs.
- 18 Q. Reported it to Jose and Mike?
- 19 A. Yeah.
- 20 Q. Okay. You found there were no bubbles or anything like that?
- 21 A. No.
- 22 Q. Yeah, but just that you smelled it?
- 23 A. Yeah.
- 24 Q. And did this check?
- 25 A. Yeah. And then it went away.

1 Q. Yeah.

2 A. It went away, it was like it was nothing.

3 Q. Okay. That was around the -- that was in front of the  
4 parking lot?

5 A. That is the boiler house.

6 Q. Boiler house, right.

7 A. It was not Building 2, that is --

8 Q. Right. Okay. And it was around 8 o'clock, yeah, okay. So  
9 after you reported it to Jose and Mike, what did you do after --

10 A. I left it in their hands, I went and went back to doing  
11 unloading stuff.

12 Q. Okay, you're unloading stuff, yeah. And unloading stuff in  
13 Building Number 2?

14 A. I'm in there every day somewhere, I was in there every day at  
15 some point cleaning something or changing screens or, you know,  
16 checking tank levels and going up and talking to the lines. So --

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. -- I don't remember if I went in there that night to mess  
19 around with anything, but I might have. It was not my area that  
20 month, I was assigned to Area 3, which is Building 1.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. But everything was very clean in there, so it's -- the more  
23 changeovers and things we have, the more time I'd spend, you know,  
24 cleaning regardless of whether or not it was my spot, but it just  
25 happened to not be my spot.

1 Q. Yeah. And so your shift ended at what time?

2 A. Eleven, I'm always -- at 11:00.

3 Q. Eleven, okay. And then you went home?

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. Okay. And you always park in the employee parking lot?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. Okay. And you never smelled gas after --

8 A. No.

9 Q. -- that one time? Okay. So then you come back Friday, you  
10 interacted with Mark Baxter, the truck driver.

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. Did he notice anything, in conversations with him, did he see  
13 anything?

14 A. No.

15 Q. Smell anything?

16 A. In fact, he -- if anyone was cooking around there, he'd --  
17 he'd mention it, because he and I talked about food a lot.

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. He's a food guy and I'm a food guy and yeah, if we had  
20 discussed any smells in, you know, the past 2 weeks, it was who  
21 was cooking what where and we'd guess where it was coming from.  
22 Oh, is that from Mecca, is that one of these guys?

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. Yeah, it was one of the things, so -- but any smells  
25 discussed, that would've been it and no gas mentioned, nothing

1 like that.

2 Q. Nothing too, okay.

3 A. No.

4 Q. And did you see him leave or -- well, I guess he was also  
5 there during the explosion.

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. Yeah, yeah.

8 A. When I reentered Building 2, Mark Baxter was still in his  
9 cab.

10 Q. In his -- oh, okay, in the cab of his truck, okay. Now  
11 switching over, leading up to the accident, like in the last 6  
12 months or so or in the last year, have you had any gas incidents,  
13 needed to report anything to UGI or --

14 A. Not personally.

15 Q. Or to your supervisor? Anything, no gas odors, stuff --

16 A. Not personally.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. If there had been people talking about it, I would've heard  
19 about it because that's the nature of the business.

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. You guys have a very -- you guys all get along, kind of a --

23 A. Oh, very much.

24 Q. Yeah, yeah.

25 A. If somebody stubs their toe on the third floor, you'll hear

1 about it --

2 Q. You hear about it.

3 A. -- in the other building.

4 Q. Okay. Right. So you guys all share everything, yeah, yeah.

5 A. Absolutely.

6 Q. Okay. So no reports of gas odors leading up to the accident,  
7 and any fire incidents?

8 A. Over the years, I was in charge of the fire extinguishers.

9 Q. Um-hum.

10 A. I was also training somebody.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. So if you check the fire extinguishers, you will not only see  
13 my initials on there, you'll see two other people's, from me  
14 taking them around and showing them where they are. But I think  
15 I've personally put out four or five minor fires there over the  
16 years, just normal stuff that happens when you're doing  
17 manufacturing stuff, all motor related, you know, if something  
18 gets stuck and keeps going, it's going to pop.

19 Q. Okay, right. Any other chemicals on scene?

20 A. Not in Building 2's basement that would be volatile, anything  
21 that I would know of. It's all chocolate and water down there.

22 Q. In the basement.

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Anywhere throughout the building?

25 A. In Building 2?

- 1 Q. Yeah.
- 2 A. No, not that I would know of. Upstairs, I know we ran  
3 alcohol on -- sprayed them on the rollers.
- 4 Q. Sure.
- 5 A. But other than that, I can't think of anything else funny --
- 6 Q. Okay.
- 7 A. -- funny up there.
- 8 Q. You said you were in charge of the fire extinguishers.
- 9 A. Yes, ma'am.
- 10 Q. So you received training on those?
- 11 A. Yes.
- 12 Q. From who?
- 13 A. She's long gone, I can't --
- 14 Q. It was outside training?
- 15 A. No, no.
- 16 Q. Oh.
- 17 A. Oh, I've had both, actually. I think I'd worked with the guy  
18 from Mogel before and I also had -- I cannot remember the name of  
19 the lady that trained me --
- 20 Q. Okay.
- 21 A. -- on the fire extinguishers.
- 22 Q. She was internal?
- 23 A. Yes.
- 24 Q. Okay. Were you on the safety committee?
- 25 A. Yes, for many years.

1 Q. Oh, okay. What would you guys cover in your safety committee  
2 meetings? How often would you meet?

3 A. I don't remember how often we'd meet, but we would cover all  
4 nature of cutting, crushing, falling hazards, that was the main  
5 focus, go around and talk to all of the employees about, you know,  
6 did you have -- you know, anything where anyone could get hurt,  
7 tell us about it and we'll write it down and we'll all go talk  
8 about it.

9 Q. Okay. Did natural gas ever come up --

10 A. No.

11 Q. -- during any of these? Any kind of fire safety training?

12 A. In the event of a fire, we'd -- I mean, it was part of the  
13 curriculum, but it wasn't -- you know, but when we'd go around to  
14 do safety things, it was not -- I wouldn't, for instance, go to  
15 Line 1 and have someone tell me oh, this fire extinguisher is  
16 here, it should be here, because I think we had more fire  
17 extinguishers than we needed per foot for both buildings.

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. Of each and every type.

20 Q. Okay. Did you ever deal with the thermostat on the gas  
21 boilers?

22 A. No.

23 Q. Oh, okay. Do you know who --

24 A. Those were preset, I believe they were preset to 105, but  
25 everything would be 110 or so. But in the summers, Building 2

1 would be much hotter because it was underground, that was just the  
2 nature of it.

3 Q. So do you know the chocolate lines that run between Building  
4 1 and 2, since you're an unloader?

5 A. Yeah, I know how they would stack and go beneath the  
6 building. I've told those -- been told those pipes, of course,  
7 would be pulled out once in a blue moon and replaced, but I've  
8 never -- I've never been part of that process, but I have shot  
9 bullets, which are plastic and rubber rods with -- a rod with a  
10 cone tip and two rubber gaskets on them to clear chocolate lines  
11 so they don't go solid when the lines are down. I've done that  
12 many, many times from Building 2 to Building 1, in which case they  
13 would run through those pipes underneath the --

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. -- street to Building 1.

16 Q. Can you tell us how many were running between Building 1 and  
17 2? Looking at Exhibit 1.

18 A. All right, Exhibit 1.

19 Q. So this is Cherry Street.

20 A. Right.

21 Q. This is 2nd Avenue.

22 A. So the pipes would be going from here over to here.

23 Q. Towards the front?

24 A. Yeah, they would've been going through the wall --

25 Q. Okay.



1 A. -- over here. If this was the big, big boiler, everything  
2 would've been going through, through right here.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. We had a pipe from Tank 2 --

5 Q. Um-hum.

6 A. -- that would go up through the ceiling to Line 6, that would  
7 be Building 2. We would have the -- Tanks 1 and 2 were connected,  
8 that pipe would come vertically up back to -- on the left side,  
9 with Cherry Street being the reference, towards the boiler and  
10 then to the left, under the street.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. The pipe system from 4, 5, 6, and 7 had pumps set in front of  
13 them. It was one, two -- now I can't remember, one, two, three,  
14 four, I think there were four total pumps back there. The fourth  
15 tank's pump would go -- or piping would go to the first pump  
16 immediately in front of it and could go -- I think that went  
17 through the wall and would also go up to Line 6 and then also  
18 could be pumped under the street. These tanks would all have sets  
19 that would bind together and go this way.

20 Q. How many would be going into Building 1? Do you remember?

21 A. It's tough. One, two -- I would think it would've had to  
22 have been five, I would think.

23 Q. That could run from Building 2 to Building 1?

24 A. Over here, I would think it would have to have been five.

25 I'm imagining it in my head, it would've been something like that

1 and with the thickness, I think that would be how it would've had  
2 to have been.

3 Q. Okay. And it would be running underneath, underground,  
4 across, like across Cherry?

5 A. Yeah, across Cherry, all through this --

6 Q. Yeah.

7 A. -- system right here.

8 Q. Okay, okay. Great. So about five, you think?

9 A. I think.

10 Q. Yeah, yeah. Would you work with these things to be --

11 A. These would not be changed out.

12 Q. Oh, okay.

13 A. This was changed out at a manifold in the other building.  
14 That was how we were able to move all of -- all of that around  
15 between the lines. The only manual connections that had to be  
16 changed in here would be is if you were pumping up to Line 6 --

17 Q. Um-hum.

18 A. -- which would mean disconnecting a pipe from either Tank 2  
19 or Tank 3 to connect vertically upstairs, but nothing -- neither  
20 was connected for the current operation, they were using Tank 4,  
21 which would've fed over and up.

22 Q. Tank 4, which is over and up to --

23 A. To Line 6, yeah.

24 Q. Six, which is in Building Number 2?

25 A. In Building 2.

- 1 Q. Got it, okay. Okay, so just to generally understand, these  
2 are feeding into different lines --
- 3 A. Yes.
- 4 Q. -- right, throughout Building 2 and Building 1?
- 5 A. And Building 1.
- 6 Q. Does Building 1 have its own tanks?
- 7 A. Yes.
- 8 Q. Okay.
- 9 A. Building 1 has Tanks 8 and 9, which 9 was the one I was  
10 unloading into --
- 11 Q. Okay.
- 12 A. -- at the time of all this.
- 13 Q. Do you mind labeling the rest of the tanks?
- 14 A. No, sure. Tank 4, 5, 6, 7.
- 15 Q. Okay, thanks.
- 16 A. Yeah.
- 17 Q. And just put your initials like right here, thanks.
- 18 A. You got it. Like --
- 19 Q. Like right here.
- 20 A. Here?
- 21 Q. Yeah. Outside the diagram.
- 22 A. With each --
- 23 Q. No, no, no. Just right here.
- 24 A. Oh, just -- okay.
- 25 Q. Just so we know it was you who labeled it. Okay.

- 1 A. All right.
- 2 Q. Thanks. And so 7 -- and so 8 and 9 were in Building 1?
- 3 A. Yeah.
- 4 Q. Got it.
- 5 A. Those are the big guys.
- 6 Q. Okay. They're bigger than these?
- 7 A. They are massive.
- 8 Q. Oh, okay.
- 9 A. I think 81,000 pounds, I think.
- 10 Q. Okay. So each tanks holds --
- 11 A. Different amounts.
- 12 Q. They're different, oh, okay. They were all different sizes?
- 13 A. Yeah, I want to say 35, 35, 45, 68, 68, 68, 68, I think.
- 14 Q. Okay, all right. But only five of these would've been --
- 15 would've been connected to go under?
- 16 A. Yeah, there would've been five.
- 17 Q. Transmission lines, yeah, yeah.
- 18 A. I think. Again, I think --
- 19 Q. Right. Okay.
- 20 A. -- because of the manifold and I did not deal with the
- 21 manifold, I was not a line tech --
- 22 Q. Okay.
- 23 A. -- but I have a vague idea of how it all worked, I never had
- 24 to really get to learn that sequence.
- 25 Q. Okay.

1 A. And because this grouping went right to there, that wouldn't  
2 have been the focus, anyway. The only time, you know, if  
3 chocolate had come pouring out of there from under the street or  
4 something, then -- you know, then it would've been a thing.

5 Q. So in the years that you have worked here, was there any  
6 construction going on to deal with these chocolate lines?

7 A. The lines themselves, I believe at one point we had pulled  
8 out those pipes, but I couldn't give you specifics on that.

9 Q. It was while you were working there?

10 A. Yeah, it was, you know, in the time I was there.

11 Q. And when you say pull out the pipes, you mean for  
12 replacement?

13 A. Yeah, replacement or cleaning or whatever, but again, that  
14 was -- I was not involved in it, I just kind of heard about it.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. I heard that was a thing that happened at some point.

17 Q. But would it have happened in the last like, say, 3 years?

18 A. Last three, I don't know.

19 Q. Oh, okay.

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. You don't know?

22 A. No.

23 Q. Okay. You can't recall?

24 A. No, sorry.

25 Q. No, no, that's okay. But you do know there was some type

1 of --

2 A. I think at some point that that was all pulled and cleaned.

3 Q. Oh, okay.

4 A. At least some of it, something, something was --

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. -- pulled out, out of there. I just -- yeah, I just --

7 Q. Yeah. Did you see the gas meter against Building Number 2?

8 A. Yes. I believe all that was new, I think I was told that was  
9 done within the last year. That was just hearsay, you know, from  
10 talking to people, because I remember seeing it one day and seeing  
11 it was new and shiny.

12 Q. Yeah. Did you see exactly where it was placed? Was it right  
13 up against the wall?

14 A. It was when you would walk towards -- towards Building 2 from  
15 here, I think it was located up in this region somewhere, because  
16 my unloading, my unloading area would've been here, the pipes  
17 would've been here, so it would've been way up here, I think --

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. -- closer to the door.

20 Q. Okay. This is the -- oh, I see.

21 A. Yeah, yeah, I'm talking -- I'm taking us outside of the  
22 building.

23 Q. Right. Right. So -- yeah. So right next to the door.

24 A. Yeah, in that general --

25 Q. Right.

1 A. -- area.

2 Q. Okay. Would it be along Cherry or --

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Okay, all right. Did you ever have issues with that meter?  
5 Was it fine?

6 A. No, I never had to deal with it, yeah, zero, it was one of  
7 those things, "oh, look, that's nice and new and shiny."

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. But you never had to do any soap tests on it?

11 A. No. No, I never -- I never -- you know, nothing, zero.

12 Q. Yeah. Any other lines along -- service lines, gas service  
13 lines around here?

14 A. Not that I'm aware of.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. In fact, I don't even remember that meter well enough, other  
17 than it being nice and shiny --

18 Q. Right.

19 A. -- as to tell you where the seals would be on it.

20 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah, okay. No worries. Okay, so -- okay,  
21 I think that's it for me right now. We'll turn to Kim.

22 BY MS. WEST:

23 Q. Okay. One more simple question. When you talked about the  
24 truck and how the connections work, when a truck pulls up, you  
25 check out the manifest and then the connection, I don't think I

1 quite understood. There were a couple terms you used and I'll see  
2 if I -- you talked about you had a connection pipe that was --

3 A. Yeah, two different kinds of connections --

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. -- of pipes we're dealing with here, I had a 90-degree  
6 unloading pipe --

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. -- that was connected directly to the back of the tanker.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. And then -- which would be clamped directly to the truck.  
11 There's a thick seal in there to, you know, prevent leaking,  
12 giving you resistance when you put everything together.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. And then the tube, which I guess would be about from there to  
15 there, I want to say 14, 12 or 14 feet, I'm not sure, was brought  
16 out through the door and again, this is all held open with  
17 bungees. And then in --

18 Q. The doors are being held open?

19 A. Yeah, yeah.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. Hold open the doors for this, and in through the wall and  
22 connected --

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. -- on the inside. The same --

25 Q. The same connection?



1 A. The same sort of process where you have ---

2 Q. Like a clamshell?

3 A. -- two ears, I guess, I don't know what the technical term  
4 is, sorry, but two ears that are closed like this and an inner  
5 seal of the tube so that when you pull it together, the pressure  
6 from the bulbs at the tips of the ears compresses everything and  
7 keeps it together. And then the same is done to the 90-degree  
8 pipe, you hook it on the end the same way, easy-peasy.

9 Q. And the connection's inside the building?

10 A. Inside and outside.

11 Q. Okay. So you have the truck and then were you saying --

12 A. I have the truck and then the 90-degree --

13 Q. Um-hum.

14 A. -- pipe connected to the back of the truck.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. The hose is connected to the 90-degree pipe --

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. -- going through the tube, through the wall, and then  
19 connected once again on the inside to the inlet which leads to the  
20 housing and the pump, to pump up into the tank.

21 Q. I see, okay. So there's two connections, okay.

22 A. Two connections, and the only electric involved there is  
23 turning the pump on, there's no other -- there's no other --  
24 everything is mechanical --

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. -- up to that point.

2 Q. And the connection is made by you or the driver?

3 A. Both. I will connect everything, but he will help me bring  
4 the hose out and put everything together. Sometimes, while I'm  
5 inside clamping one end, he'll clamp the other end. Sometimes,  
6 depending on how difficult it is to hold the hose with what the  
7 temperature is, the colder it is, the stiffer the hose is,  
8 depending on whether or not the hose has been moved or put this  
9 way or that, sometimes it stays bent in a certain direction,  
10 things like that, so sometimes I might get out there and he might  
11 still be holding it and I'll have to help him put it on. I don't  
12 remember which we did that day, but --

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. -- it was very fast putting it together, if I recall  
15 correctly. So I think --

16 Q. So typically, how long does that process take?

17 A. Sometimes it will be a minute or two, sometimes it will be,  
18 you know, 10 minutes.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. It depends on -- in Mark's case, usually very fast, 5, 10  
21 minutes, something like that.

22 Q. Is Mark typically the driver?

23 A. Yeah, he's the best of the best. You know, he's almost  
24 always early, half an hour to an hour early and I try to plan my  
25 schedule around that, if I know he's going to be the driver. He

1 would always line tankers perfectly at each building so I would  
2 not have to. That's where I would lose a lot of time unloading,  
3 maneuvering the drivers into position, but he was always in  
4 position for each building every time.

5 Q. So are there multiple places that he connects?

6 A. Yeah. Whenever we unload, there's only one connection to  
7 each building. It's not like we have tubes, multiple tubes,  
8 coming out of the truck, but one connection per building. So  
9 Building 1, we pull up, set up the connection I described, set up  
10 the unload, and for Building 2, the same deal, we go up there, the  
11 same setup just mirrored over to the other side, except in that  
12 case we'd lead the tube out the door.

13 Q. So on Building 2, where is the typical connection?

14 A. Building 2's only connection --

15 Q. Only connection.

16 A. -- would've been -- I think we're missing little pieces here.  
17 I think this would've been the door, so I think the pump and the  
18 ramp would've been here, I think. Yeah, no, this is correct, what  
19 would've -- yeah, yeah, this is okay. If this is the stairwell,  
20 the stairway down, the outlet would've been right here, the pump  
21 would've been right here, and the very simple three-point manifold  
22 would've been right here leading down to the screen housing and  
23 the pipe distribution all the way down.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. So if we had been unloading in Building 2, which thankfully

1 we were not, it would've been right here. Sorry.

2 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.

3 MS. WEST: Okay.

4 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah.

5 MS. WEST: I don't see it.

6 MS. GUNARATNAM: Right here.

7 MS. WEST: Right here.

8 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah, around this area.

9 MS. WEST: Okay.

10 MS. GUNARATNAM: Facing Cherry.

11 BY MS. WEST:

12 Q. So thank you, that helps a lot. Where does your chocolate  
13 come from?

14 A. Many places. We make our coating, our standard compound  
15 chocolate, right over here.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Our white chocolate, the same. We have our milk chocolate  
18 come from Blommer, Barry Callebaut, and Cargill. We also do  
19 contracts for Hershey, we've been getting Hershey tankers from  
20 West Hershey and I cannot remember where they would, sometimes  
21 Stuarts Draft, maybe.

22 Q. So you have some internal as well as external?

23 A. And some come in third party.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. Let's see, I have one more question here for you. I don't  
2 know if you can talk about this, but in the basement of Building  
3 2, where those bundles go across the street --

4 A. Um-hum.

5 Q. -- to Building 1, can you see anything on the wall? How do  
6 you know that they're there, I guess. If I walked down there,  
7 what would I see?

8 A. Oh, the second you walked into the -- into Building 2's  
9 basement, the first thing you would see is the back of Tank 7, our  
10 peanut butter tank.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. If you look to your left, you would've seen the unloading  
13 pump and that three-point manifold. If you walked down the stairs  
14 and looked to your left, you would -- this is all wall here, you  
15 would see the pump in front of Tank 2. In order to see the setup,  
16 you would have to walk into the tank room for 1 through 3 and the  
17 screen housing setup. Make a left and then make a right and then  
18 you would be facing the boiler and the pipe grouping.

19 Q. Okay. And what would you see on the wall? Would you see  
20 anything on the wall or --

21 A. Yeah, you would see the giant boiler and you would see the  
22 pipes coming down and going this way and I guess heat tape, you  
23 might see some heat tape.

24 Q. About how high would that bundle be?

25 A. I think --

1 Q. Just a guess.

2 A. I think, according to my driver's license, I'm five-eleven,  
3 so I think it would've been about here, so maybe, you know, five-  
4 eight-ish up, I think that would've been.

5 Q. Okay. And what would the boiler look like?

6 A. I'm sorry?

7 Q. What would the boiler look like?

8 A. It was all covered in white insulation, completely covered  
9 all the way back with a drainage pipe coming down --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. -- which we had a bucket under and it would fill up and you'd  
12 dump it out.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Easy-peasy.

15 Q. The manual method.

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Just like at home.

19 MS. WEST: All right. Actually, that's it for me. Thank  
20 you. It was very descriptive.

21 MR. RUNYEON: Oh, excellent.

22 BY MS. COOPER-SMITH:

23 Q. Okay. Well, thank you. I just wanted to get a couple  
24 clarifications here. The truck driver, he arrived at 4:00 --

25 A. Yeah.

- 1 Q. -- but didn't actually offload until 4:30?
- 2 A. No, no. I had started that pump by 4:15.
- 3 Q. Oh, you started the pump --
- 4 A. Yes.
- 5 Q. -- by 4:15, okay. And you said he usually arrived early
- 6 anyway.
- 7 A. Yeah.
- 8 Q. Okay.
- 9 A. Yeah, that was part of my schedule, I worked that into my
- 10 plans over the years.
- 11 Q. Does he call you directly and tell you he's coming or does he
- 12 just normally --
- 13 A. No, I just -- no, I don't like giving out my number to
- 14 everybody.
- 15 Q. Okay.
- 16 A. So yeah, I just kind of knew, you know, what's going on.
- 17 Q. Okay, so you said something about -- that you were changing
- 18 to Tank 4 from Tank 9, am I correct?
- 19 A. I was going to -- splitting would be the --
- 20 Q. Splitting, okay.
- 21 A. -- the technical term.
- 22 Q. Okay, so you split between Tank 4 and Tank 9.
- 23 A. And thankfully, I never got over to 4, but that was --
- 24 Q. Okay.
- 25 A. -- that was the reason I was over in Building 2 --

1 Q. Right.

2 A. -- that day was to change the pipes, they were set up  
3 originally for Tanks 1 and 2, which contained -- I think it was  
4 Barry Callebaut milk chocolate and there was a -- I think a 45 --  
5 no, no, a 90-degree little pipe that comes off from the center  
6 screen housing, which I turned to the 45-degree pipe, which went  
7 back to Tank 4, which I would've put 4,000 pounds in there that  
8 day.

9 Q. Okay. So with that, what type -- would there be a disruption  
10 from -- to switch over, what type of disruption is there?

11 A. Very simple.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. In order to split a tanker between two buildings, you must  
14 clear the lines, meaning the pipes and tubes that contain  
15 chocolate up to that point, otherwise, when you break them apart,  
16 everything spills.

17 Q. Right.

18 A. What you do is you close the access point which, in this  
19 case, is the rear of the tanker.

20 Q. Um-hum.

21 A. You turn off the pump first, close the access point, turn on  
22 the pump, go outside, and you have to let air into the system, of  
23 course, otherwise everything, you know, caves in. So you take  
24 off, in this case there are many ways to do it, but the easiest  
25 way and the technical way is to take off the sample valve, which



1 would let air into the system, which clears all the tubes out and  
2 at that point the tube is taken back into whichever building you  
3 started at, you go to the other building and you would have to  
4 turn whatever pipe you were using over. Sometimes we had  
5 different piping for these situations, not only did we have the  
6 90-degree, we also had a 45-degree and we had an older step-down  
7 pipe, we had two of them which could easily be turned in this --  
8 in that situation.

9 But depending on the tanker, we might have to take those  
10 pipes off and replace them with other ones so they would fit the  
11 tube properly, left or right, depending on the building. And once  
12 we got up to the next building, the process would start from  
13 scratch again, where the pipe is -- the unloading pipe faces the  
14 building, the tube is brought out and connected and the whole  
15 process starts all over again with opening up the tanker and  
16 opening up the access to whatever tank was in question and  
17 starting the pump, checking the flow, and making sure everything  
18 goes where it's supposed to go.

19 Q. Okay. And on this particular day, how far in that process  
20 did you actually get?

21 A. I would estimate that I had pumped off -- that maybe I had  
22 16,000 pounds left, I'm just judging from glancing into that tank  
23 at one point, because I planned on leaving four dry inches in that  
24 tank, which would've given me four to put in the other building  
25 and -- yeah, 16, I'm trying to think of how many inches that

1 would've been. It's like a foot and it's like 2 feet, 24. Maybe,  
2 yeah, maybe not even that much because the compound moves slowly  
3 and if I would've started at 4:15, by 5 o'clock it would've been  
4 four to five, five to six, 2 hours for an unload. I probably  
5 wasn't even halfway through that tanker.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. So maybe I had offloaded around 24,000 at that point, maybe.

8 Q. So estimated?

9 A. Estimated.

10 Q. Okay. You said that you killed the pump.

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. And that it was in a procedure?

13 A. Yeah, in an emergency situation --

14 Q. Um-hum.

15 A. -- if it's possible, if it's not a risk to me or anyone else,  
16 I will -- I will -- and I know, you know, everything's going down,  
17 everyone's got to get out, I shut the process down, whatever the  
18 process is that I'm doing.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. In this case, the process was unloading. If I was running  
21 the mold washer, the mold washer would've been killed, the steam  
22 would've been killed.

23 Q. Um-hum.

24 A. If I was running a foiler, the foiler would've been stopped,  
25 you know, that sort of thing.

1 Q. Okay. And then one last question, and I'm trying to see it  
2 in my notes here. I think you spoke about the fact that you  
3 thought you smelled gas the night before -- the day before, okay,  
4 and you told two individuals, right?

5 A. Um-hum.

6 Q. And when you told -- but before you told them, when you  
7 smelled it, you actually soaped up the meter seal?

8 A. Yeah, I sprayed around all seven seals.

9 Q. And you didn't see bubbles at all?

10 A. No bubbles, no bubbles.

11 Q. Once you sprayed around, did you still smell gas at that  
12 point?

13 A. I don't remember. Yeah, sorry.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I don't remember. It was there and it was gone, not like a  
16 wisp, but like a -- "oom," you know.

17 Q. Right. Okay. All right. And I think you used the term  
18 standard operating procedure.

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Is it standard operating procedure to do what you did in  
21 terms of soaping up --

22 A. Not to -- soap but, you know, water.

23 Q. Right.

24 A. But yeah, yeah, to -- any time, you know, it's one of those  
25 things I learned growing up, you know, if you have a -- if you

1 smell gas, you check the seals of whatever, of whatever it is.

2 Q. Yeah, but I want to just be specific to Palmer's procedures.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. So if there's a standard operating procedure that if you do  
5 that, that's what you should do if you smell gas.

6 A. If you smell gas. I haven't actually read -- I don't -- I  
7 cannot quote to you --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- a thing that I had read. In previous experience with  
10 maintenance, I had known that that was the first thing that they  
11 did.

12 Q. Okay, good. Okay. Last question. When you told them that  
13 you had smelled gas, is there some kind of report they're supposed  
14 to write?

15 A. I don't know. I do not know. I don't have any report on my  
16 end for that --

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. -- other than go and tell maintenance.

19 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Okay, go and tell maintenance. All right,  
20 that's all I have.

21 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Logan?

22 BY MR. SMITH:

23 Q. You said that you talked to Mark at what, 4:15?

24 A. Yeah, between 4:00 and 4:15.

25 Q. And then you moved back. Did you go back to Building 2 to

1 adjust some piping or --

2 A. I did go back to Building 2 to change the piping.

3 Q. What time was that, are you thinking?

4 A. I'm thinking after 4:30.

5 Q. You didn't smell any gas yet?

6 A. No, zero. That day I did not smell any gas. The day of the  
7 explosion I did not smell any gas.

8 MR. SMITH: Okay, okay. That's it. That's the only thing,  
9 I'm just trying to figure out -- okay, that's all I have.

10 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Can I ask one more question?

11 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah, go ahead.

12 BY MS. COOPER-SMITH:

13 Q. Just to confirm, you were in Building 2 at some point during  
14 -- on the --

15 A. Absolutely, on the 24th.

16 Q. On the 24th, yes.

17 A. On the 24th, absolutely.

18 Q. And from what I understand, you had to go over there because  
19 you were concerned about the volume of chocolate and whether --

20 A. Yeah. And I had -- I knew it wouldn't fit.

21 Q. You knew it wouldn't fit.

22 A. So I had to change over from 1 and 2 to 4.

23 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Okay, yeah.

24 MR. SMITH: And that was about 4:30, that's kind of what I  
25 was asking you, too, right?

1 MR. RUNYEON: Between 4:30, 4:45.

2 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Four thirty. Four forty-five. Okay.

3 MR. RUNYEON: That range.

4 MR. SMITH: Okay.

5 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Okay.

6 MR. RUNYEON: And then I also went up into Building 2 to  
7 speak with Xiomara --

8 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Xiomara.

9 MR. RUNYEON: -- about the chocolate pulling situation.

10 MR. SMITH: Around the same time there?

11 MR. RUNYEON: Yeah, yeah, around -- yeah, I think that was  
12 all one sequence --

13 MR. SMITH: Okay, I got it.

14 MR. RUNYEON: -- the change, because I noticed Tank 4 was not  
15 being used.

16 MR. SMITH: Okay.

17 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Oh, so when you talked to Xiomara, that  
18 was in Building 2.

19 MR. RUNYEON: Yes, that was Line 6, Building 2.

20 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Okay.

21 MR. SMITH: Because she's a line -- she was a line tech.

22 MR. RUNYEON: Yes.

23 MR. SMITH: Okay, right.

24 MS. COOPER-SMITH: That's it, Rachael. Thank you.

25 MS. GUNARATNAM: Oh, okay.

1 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

2 Q. Who do you report to? I'm sorry if you said that already.

3 A. It used to be Donna Newman.

4 Q. Okay. And did you see Donna that day at all?

5 A. Only in the parking lot. Oh, no, maybe I saw her coming, I  
6 don't remember. I think it was one of those days where I had to  
7 get right to it, so I don't think I saw her until after everything  
8 -- after everything went down.

9 Q. Okay. Oh, okay, after.

10 A. Yeah, I don't think I saw her until we were all in the  
11 parking lot.

12 Q. Okay. So you spoke to Xiomara --

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. -- about the lines and she didn't tell you anything --

15 A. No, no. They were in full work mode, they were rolling.

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. You know, I saw Judy and the other lady I didn't know,  
18 cleaning the belts and everything seemed hunky-dory up there.

19 Q. Oh, okay. And you would've heard if anything --

20 A. Oh, yeah.

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. No, if there was anything funky going on, someone would've  
23 been complaining and I'd be one of the first ones to hear it.

24 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Okay. I think that's all. Okay,  
25 yeah, I think we're good. I'll stop the recording.

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(Whereupon, at 6:31 p.m., the interview concluded.)



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  
                                  FACTORY IN WEST READING,  
                                  PENNSYLVANIA ON MARCH 24, 2023  
                                  Interview of William T. Runyeon

ACCIDENT NO.:                PLD23FR002

PLACE:                        Wyomissing, 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.



\_\_\_\_\_  
David A. Martini  
Transcriber