

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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NATURAL GAS BUILDING EXPLOSION &  
FIRE NEAR WEST READING,  
PENNSYLVANIA, ON MARCH 24, 2023

Accident No.: PLD23LR002

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Interview of: LOGAN SMITH, Vice President  
R.M. Palmer

MARK SCHLOTT, Chief Executive Officer  
R.M. Palmer

Wyomissing Pennsylvania

Wednesday,  
August 16, 2023

APPEARANCES:

MICHAEL HOEPF, Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

RACHEL GUNARATNAM, HAZMAT Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

GARY MAURER, Director of Process Improvement  
UGI Utilities

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

COREY WRIGHT, Attorney  
Wilson Elser

I N D E X

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I N T E R V I E W

1  
2 MR. HOEPF: We are on the record. All right. My name is  
3 Mike Hoepf. Today is August 16, 2023, and we are at Palmer  
4 headquarters in Wyomissing, Pennsylvania, in connection with an  
5 accident that occurred in West Reading, Pennsylvania, on March  
6 24th, 2023. The NTSB accident number is PLD23LR002.

7 The purpose of the investigation is to increase safety, not  
8 to assign fault, blame, or liability. NTSB cannot offer any  
9 guarantee or confidentiality or immunity from legal or  
10 (indiscernible) actions. A transcript or summary of the interview  
11 will go in the public docket. Interviewee can have one  
12 representative of the interviewee's choice.

13 Does everyone understand this interview is being recorded?

14 ALL: Yes.

15 MR. HOEPF: Thank you. And I'm going to spell my name and  
16 state my affiliation again and I'll ask everyone else to do the  
17 same. So, again, my name is Mike Hoepf, that's H-O-E-P-F. I am a  
18 systems safety investigator with the National Transportation  
19 Safety Board.

20 MS. GUNARATNAM: My name is Rachel Gunaratnam, G-U-N-A-R-A-T-  
21 N-A-M, NTSB HAZMAT investigator.

22 MR. MAURER: Gary Maurer, M-A-U-R-E-R, UGI Utilities,  
23 Director of Process Improvement.

24 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Terri Cooper-Smith, Pennsylvania Public  
25 Utility Commissioner. Smith, S-M-I-T-H, Pipeline Safety

1 Supervisor.

2 MR. SMITH: Logan Smith, S-M-I-T-H, R. M. Palmer Company.

3 MR. SCHLOTT: Mark Schlott, S-C-H-L-O-T-T, R. M. Palmer  
4 Company. I'm the Chief Executive Officer.

5 MS. GUNARATNAM: And your representative?

6 MR. HOEPF: Corey.

7 MR. WRIGHT: This is Corey Wright, C-O-R-E-Y W-R-I-G-H-T with  
8 the Wilson Elser Firm, representative for the witnesses today.

9 INTERVIEW OF LOGAN SMITH AND MARK SCHLOTT

10 MR. HOEPF: Okay, great. Thank you all so much. Appreciate  
11 that. So, Mark, you've kind of introduced yourself already.  
12 Logan, can you just talk a little bit about your experience, your  
13 position just high level, you know, responsibilities day to day?

14 MR. SMITH: Sure. Logan Smith, as I said, VP Operations and  
15 Technical Services, basically responsible for the quality, food  
16 safety, regulatory, also coalman (ph.) operations and employee --  
17 and then production operations based on responsibility  
18 efficiencies (ph.), customers -- continuous improvement and  
19 operations.

20 MR. HOEPF: Okay, great, great. Thank you. And you  
21 gentlemen have provided some of this information before. But just  
22 to get into a little bit more general information about the  
23 company, about how many employees does -- work for R.M. Palmer?

24 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, this is Mark from R.M. Palmer. We have  
25 about 500 to 550 full-time employees and we use a seasonal staff

1 between 2 to 300 employees.

2 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Okay, great. Thank you. Can you just  
3 generally describe the operation?

4 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah. So, again, Mark, for R.M. Palmer. We're  
5 the fifth leading chocolate molding company in the United States.  
6 We have a -- basically a seasonal candy company. We produce  
7 chocolate novelties for the country. We do shipment to all parts  
8 of North America, and we do have some international sales.

9 And again, our purpose for being is really to make fun,  
10 festive, whimsical candy for the holidays. We also -- part of our  
11 portfolio is a contract manufacturing where some of the big brands  
12 that you see out there, especially at the holidays, we manufacture  
13 here. So, you know, we have -- we're the largest contract  
14 chocolate molding manufacturer in the United States.

15 MR. HOEPF: I didn't know that. Great. Thank you. Thank  
16 you. So, can you talk a little bit about the different buildings  
17 that you had in operation, you know, prior to this incident?

18 MR. SCHLOTT: Sure. So, again, Mark, from R.M. Palmer. Our  
19 West trading facility consisted of two manufacturing facilities we  
20 called Building 1. It was the primary building. That's where we  
21 had our corporate headquarters. That one -- that building was, I  
22 think, right around 1950 R.M. Senior built one of the first  
23 production lines in that facility. It's where we made all the  
24 hollow bunnies that we're known for. The building was -- it was  
25 more or less chocolate novelties and chocolate hollow. That was

1 the capabilities for that facility.

2 Our Building 2 facility had one production line in it, and it  
3 made -- it was a roller plant and it made chocolate eggs and  
4 chocolate balls for the holidays, foiled chocolate eggs and  
5 chocolate balls for what you see in the bags, like in Easter  
6 baskets and such.

7 Our Wyomissing facility, Building 3, is more of a state-of-  
8 the-art facility. It has tremendous capabilities where we can do  
9 all kinds of different products, one shot, bars, all different  
10 kind of products. Has the ability to make over 1,000,000 pounds a  
11 week. So, it has a high capability of manufacturing chocolate.  
12 And again, that's where we make a lot of our own coatings and  
13 centers in that facility.

14 Building 4, which we're sitting in today, really was a  
15 storage area. And the room we're sitting in today, we use it as a  
16 training center for our employees. Building 5 was the building  
17 that's over the parking lot in West Reading. We never use that  
18 for manufacturing. As I mentioned before, we sort of donated that  
19 to the, to the local law enforcement to -- so that they could  
20 store their -- a lot of their equipment and such that they use in  
21 the county.

22 And our Building 6 is a 350,000 square foot distribution  
23 center where we store all of our products and ship out of across  
24 the country. So, that's our different facilities.

25 MR. HOEPF: Great, great. Thank you so much. Appreciate

1 that. Okay. So, can we talk a little bit about the shift  
2 structure, in terms of, you know, how many shifts you have? And  
3 really more kind of focused on Building 1, Building 2. In either  
4 one.

5 MR. SCHLOTT: Sure. Again, it's Mark R.M. Palmer. All of  
6 our facilities operate on a 24-hour, five-day-a-week basis.

7 MR. HOEPF: Okay. All of them. Okay.

8 MR. SCHLOTT: They -- we do get into certain times of the  
9 year, and we've been -- especially through COVID, we've been busy  
10 with our affiliation with some of our contract manufacturers. We  
11 were deemed essential. So, we were working 24/7. So, some lines  
12 will work 24 hours a day, seven days a week. But, you know, on a  
13 rotating sort of basis.

14 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Okay. Gotcha. And then so, do those, do  
15 those all, across all buildings, have, you know, specific start  
16 times, 8 to something?

17 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes. So, a first shift would be 7 a.m. to 3  
18 p.m.

19 MR. WRIGHT: Okay.

20 MR. SCHLOTT: Second shift would be 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. And  
21 third shift would be 11 p.m. to 7 a.m.

22 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Okay, great. Great. I gotcha. So, you  
23 know, again, let's talk a little bit more about Building 1,  
24 Building 2. Can you talk a little bit about, you know, generally  
25 the number of people that you would have on staff, you know, for



1 each shift there?

2 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah. Again, Mark from R.M. Palmer. We -- it  
3 would depend on the time of year when we get -- that building,  
4 probably 60 percent of its production is for Easter because of the  
5 moldings and such. So, we would get really busy from October,  
6 November, December, January, and maybe part of February because  
7 that's when we're building up for the Easter ship. You know,  
8 we're shipping Easter candy starting in December.

9 And then other times of the year, then some of the seasonal  
10 folks, you know, we would not use, and we would do some rebuilds  
11 and such. So, you know, March, April, May would be our slower  
12 times in that facility. And again, on the shifts, the first shift  
13 would have more because the corporate folks were there, the icing  
14 and ribbon people were there. You know, we have other functions  
15 that are only conducted on one -- on the first shift.

16 MR. HOEPF: Okay.

17 MR. SCHLOTT: So, it does vary tremendously. We have a core  
18 base of about 40 packers and then -- and they're full-time, year-  
19 round, and then with line technicians, operators, mechanics,  
20 utility, there's probably another 30 on each shift. So, I would,  
21 I would guess that it's right around, on an average, 70 pretty  
22 full time throughout the year in that facility. And then ramping  
23 up when we would get busy.

24 MR. HOEPF: Okay. So, maybe 70 people for during the first  
25 shift for Building 1 and 2, or total, you mean? (Indiscernible).

1 MR. SCHLOTT: Building 1 and 2, because Building 2 would have  
2 approximately five employees. Didn't take a lot of staff that  
3 operation. So, there'd be about five employees over there.

4 MR. SMITH: That's about right.

5 MR. SCHLOTT: Again, depending on what was happening that  
6 day.

7 MR. SMITH: Yeah, five to seven (indiscernible).

8 MR. SCHLOTT: If we were --

9 MR. SMITH: Bulking.

10 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, if they were put it in finished product  
11 bulk instead of these big super sacks, you would need a couple  
12 more people to do that.

13 MR. HOEPF: But okay, okay. I gotcha. So, a lot more people  
14 in Building 1.

15 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

16 MR. HOEPF: One being -- first shift being the busier shift  
17 because that's all the administrative --

18 MR. SCHLOTT: You got it.

19 MR. HOEPF: executives. Okay. I gotcha. I gotcha. And  
20 then so how about the second and third shift? What kind of  
21 staffing is there, and can you kind of talk about just are they  
22 primarily just continuing to run the operations of production then  
23 during those shifts.

24 MR. SMITH: Correct.

25 MR. SCHLOTT: Typically, yeah, the office staff would work

1 until usually around 4:30, 5:00.

2 MR. HOEPF: Okay.

3 MR. SCHLOTT: So, they would -- there'd be a little bit of  
4 crossover at the second shift, but depending on their schedules  
5 and meetings and such, but yeah, the second and third shifts would  
6 just sort of maintain the production aspect of it. So, there'd be  
7 some management folks, it'd be line technicians, maintenance,  
8 mechanics, utility people, that sort of thing, but the entire  
9 administrative staff, the icing ribbon departments, some of these  
10 other, you know, the HR Department that was over there, they would  
11 be there at night typically, you know, unless there was a need.

12 MR. HOEPF: Got you. Got you. So, that's 70 number -- but  
13 -- so, if you were to go -- if you were to show up at 7:00 at  
14 night, about how many people do you think would be --

15 MR. SCHLOTT: 50.

16 MR. SMITH: Yeah. (Indiscernible) yeah, about 50.

17 MR. HOEPF: Okay, okay.

18 MR. SCHLOTT: Again, it varies so much depending on what  
19 we're doing.

20 MR. HOEPF: Yeah. No, I get that. And the third shift  
21 similar? Maybe --

22 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

23 MR. HOEPF: -- 50? Okay. We're thinking maybe 45 in  
24 Building 1 and maybe 5 in Building 2? Again, just rough  
25 estimates.

1 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, that staffing is consistent across the  
2 shifts.

3 MR. HOEPF: Yeah. Okay. Okay. All right. I got you. I  
4 got you. So, let's talk a little bit about the chain of command.  
5 You know, just kind of who reports to who kind of thing. So,  
6 obviously, you're a top dog here as a CEO. What -- so, who are  
7 your direct reports and who reports to them and --

8 MR. SCHLOTT: Sure.

9 MR. HOEPF: -- can you guys walk me through all of that?

10 MR. SCHLOTT: So, my, you know, my senior management team  
11 would consist of the controller, you know, the VP of ops, the  
12 sales department, HR, you know, across the board purchasing,  
13 logistics --

14 MR. SMITH: IT.

15 MR. SCHLOTT: -- IT, scheduling. That would be the people  
16 that report directly into me and then underneath them --

17 MR. SMITH: Yeah. And it'd be -- for me, it would be the QA  
18 manager, the plant manager, maintenance manager reported to Sue --  
19 to the production manager. For me, it's pretty much the plant  
20 manager and the quality manager.

21 MR. HOEPF: Okay, so we've got --

22 MR. SCHLOTT: Coalman manager (ph.).

23 MR. SMITH: And Coalman manager.

24 MR. HOEPF: So, Logan would be one of your direct reports?

25 MR. SCHLOTT: That is correct.

1 MR. HOEPF: Okay. And then so, and then so, the plant  
2 manager would be your -- one of your direct reports then?

3 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

4 MR. SCHLOTT: Sort of a dotted line. So, they're part of our  
5 senior management team. We have them sit in our senior management  
6 meetings where we do our strategic planning, but also, we've had,  
7 you know, sort of a dotted line. Directly report to Logan, sort  
8 of a dotted line to me when we have our senior management  
9 meetings.

10 MR. SMITH: Yeah. Because my responsibilities is the --  
11 Logan here. My responsibility is the operational part of  
12 efficiencies going out. So, they have to report the efficiency  
13 levels. Is there any possibilities of continuous improvement?  
14 You know, I can report on that, you know, scrap waste, that type  
15 of stuff, but they kind of handle the -- plant managers themself  
16 handle the operational side. They just kind of reported it into  
17 me how they were doing, basically.

18 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Yeah. So, help me understand, you know,  
19 and then just kind of, just kind of going right down to the line  
20 employees. So, you know, do -- you know, Logan, are you -- do you  
21 have any kind of -- you know, obviously, you've got a lot going on  
22 your plate, but do you do any of that first line supervision or is  
23 that --

24 MR. SMITH: No.

25 MR. HOEPF: -- is it really more kind of a --

1 MR. SMITH: Yeah, we typically have a -- what we call a lead  
2 on each production line. So, we have three -- four production  
3 lines in Building 1, one in Building 2. So, in Building 2, we had  
4 an actual line tech who had a helper, basically, a utility person.  
5 It's a smaller production line. In Building 1, they had an actual  
6 lead for that line, and a line tech, and an assistant lead for  
7 each individual line. They all reported to a shift supervisor --

8 MR. HOEPF: A shift supervisor. Okay.

9 MR. SMITH: -- who reported to the plant manager.

10 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Okay, all right. Yeah, that -- and that  
11 makes sense. That's -- and that's consistent with, you know, my  
12 understanding from some of the interviews, but I just wanted to  
13 get the -- kind of the top-down perspective. So, there's a plant  
14 manager who oversees the shift supervisor, and then reporting to  
15 the shift supervisor, there's -- you said there's one lead for  
16 Building 2. And then three or four for Building 1.

17 MR. SMITH: Correct.

18 MR. HOEPF: Okay.

19 MR. SMITH: That's correct.

20 MR. HOEPF: And then you said within Building 1, there's even  
21 -- it breaks down a little bit more from that. There's even an  
22 assistant --

23 MR. SMITH: Yes. Depending on what line it is, there's an  
24 assistant because it depends on the actual production numbers.

25 MR. HOEPF: Okay. So, you can actually have -- and it --

1 depending on -- okay, you could have an assistant -- some  
2 assistant leads. And then are we basically at, like, the  
3 technician level?

4 MR. SMITH: Technician, yeah, and then packaging.

5 MR. HOEPF: Packaging. Okay, great. I got you. I got you.  
6 Do you follow that chain of command pretty closely or is it a  
7 little bit more loose, you know? I mean, would you have -- a  
8 technician, would they always report to the assistant lead who  
9 would always report to the lead? Or do you ever have technicians  
10 come talk to you directly or --

11 MR. SMITH: Yes.

12 MR. HOEPF: -- come talk to the plant manager or something  
13 like that?

14 MR. SMITH: Yes. Yes. Because we typically -- well, they --  
15 we have a open door policy.

16 MR. HOEPF: Okay.

17 MR. SMITH: So, on every start of every day, the plant  
18 manager would meet with the actual supervisors. And we would also  
19 have huddles with the leads, you know, daily. Then you would have  
20 weekly meetings, yeah, staff meetings and stuff like that, where  
21 the actual leads are in those meetings. That's once a month that  
22 we'd have a staff meeting where we would have leads, myself, at  
23 the time Mark was in those meetings also.

24 So, we'd have meetings throughout the month as far as  
25 individual packers themselves, when they're out on the production

1 floor, the supervisors have their own individual meetings daily  
2 with the leads. They call them huddles before the shift starts.  
3 And then the packers, they -- the leads themselves meet with them  
4 before the actual start of the shift, because they have to do the  
5 lineups and things like that. That's how that communication  
6 starts.

7 MR. HOEPF: Okay. So, that's helpful. So, there's kind of a  
8 group, like, the supervisor meeting with the leads --

9 MR. SMITH: Yes.

10 MR. HOEPF: -- you know, ahead of -- at the top of shift --

11 MR. SMITH: Yes, that's Dale (ph.), he gets --

12 MR. HOEPF: -- to get into the specifics of the day. And  
13 then -- okay. And so, the plant manager wouldn't be a part of  
14 that discussion generally?

15 MR. SMITH: No, no.

16 MR. HOEPF: All right. Great. Thank you. So, you know --  
17 again, I think I've kind of already touched on this, but more so  
18 for you, Logan, you know, in a typical day, can you kind of just  
19 talk about -- I mean, are you, are you ever there really just  
20 overseeing the operation or are you pretty removed from that?

21 MR. SMITH: No, I -- what -- I'll come in in the morning, run  
22 my reports to see how -- what the efficiencies were the night  
23 before. Now I have both buildings. So, I was in and out of both  
24 buildings. So, basically what I would do is once I seen the  
25 efficiencies, I would walk around just to see how things are



1 going, talk to the plant manager, see if there was any issues  
2 throughout the night, how things are going.

3 If we're behind on something, hey, what can we do to increase  
4 this efficiency here, there? Then I would come over here to this  
5 building and basically do the same thing, meet with the plant  
6 manager, do my walks, see how the line checks are doing, you know  
7 how supervisors are doing. That's kind of my routine. I was  
8 more, you know, on the floor than in in the office.

9 MR. WRIGHT: I got you. And how about you, Mark? Is that --  
10 do -- are you ever -- do you have time to go out there and see the  
11 line?

12 MR. SCHLOTT: Oh, absolutely. Yeah. And again, the first  
13 thing we would do is check our -- we call them attainment reports.  
14 So, the first thing we can do is when we come in in the morning to  
15 see what happened through the night, you know, production amounts  
16 by workstation, by production line, that sort of thing.

17 Sometimes we would communicate if there were some issues,  
18 especially if we had Wal-Mart trucks or something waiting, right?  
19 So, Logan and I'd be on the phone pretty quick with each other,  
20 but -- you know, to service our customers properly. But yeah, I  
21 go out on the floor all the time to talk to the employees, thank  
22 them for what they're doing, you know, listen to their feedback.  
23 That's something that we do all the time.

24 MR. HOEPF: Okay, great. Thank you. So, you know, kind of  
25 just still talking about some general things here. Can you talk a

1 little bit more specifically about your maintenance department?  
2 How does, how does that work? Are they a part of that, you know,  
3 chain of command we just talked about, or are they kind of in a  
4 separate -- a different vein, in terms of --

5 MR. SMITH: Logan here, the maintenance department, Sue is  
6 responsible for the maintenance department, also, and the  
7 maintenance manager. So, basic, we have mechanics who reported  
8 into the maintenance manager, and then from there the maintenance  
9 manager reported into the plant manager. Part of --

10 MR. HOEPF: According -- I'm sorry, say -- so, you got the  
11 plant manager.

12 MR. SMITH: Uh-huh.

13 MR. HOEPF: So, the same plant manager you've referenced  
14 before --

15 MR. SMITH: Correct.

16 MR. HOEPF: -- but then that individual would also oversee  
17 the lead mechanic, you said?

18 MR. SMITH: The maintenance manager.

19 MR. HOEPF: Maintenance manager. Okay.

20 MR. SMITH: Yes.

21 MR. SCHLOTT: There was the lead under --

22 MR. SMITH: And then underneath the maintenance manager you  
23 had the actual, like, mechanics.

24 MR. HOEPF: Okay. So, there's one maintenance manager?

25 MR. SMITH: Mm-hmm.

1 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Got you. And who would -- who was that at  
2 the -- prior to this incident?

3 MR. SMITH: That was Joe Gerner (ph.).

4 MR. HOEPF: Okay, great. And I'm sorry, I think I cut you  
5 off. You were saying something else.

6 MR. SMITH: Yep.

7 MR. HOEPF: I was going to ask you just for a general  
8 overview.

9 MR. SMITH: Yeah, that's pretty much it, right there.

10 MR. HOEPF: Okay. I got you. And yeah, so, can you talk a  
11 little bit about, you know, what their primary duties are? You  
12 know, what they're mostly doing in terms of --

13 MR. SMITH: Sure. We had a mechanic that was responsible for  
14 pretty much each line. So, they would, you know, be responsible  
15 for the change orders. They would be responsible for keeping, you  
16 know, the equipment running, repairs, PMs, things like that. That  
17 was their responsibility for each one.

18 MR. HOEPF: Okay, so, each mechanic is associated with a  
19 line. That's kind of their primary --

20 MR. SMITH: Yes.

21 MR. HOEPF: -- job responsibility. Do they have other  
22 responsibilities? Or, I mean, as things kind of pop up, I mean,  
23 how does that --

24 MR. SMITH: Yeah. Yeah.

25 MR. HOEPF: You know, if a light bulb goes out do they

1 call --

2 MR. SMITH: If they see it?

3 MR. HOEPF: You know, let's say, like, a light bulb goes out  
4 or something.

5 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

6 MR. HOEPF: Do they call maintenance, you know, to deal with  
7 that?

8 MR. SMITH: Yeah. Yeah, we, you know, we had that -- the  
9 maintenance would then come and switch out -- we always had -- we  
10 also had a mechanic that we had down in Building 6 who wasn't  
11 always as busy. So, he would be called at times to work on things  
12 like that.

13 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Okay.

14 MR. SCHLOTT: This is, this is Mark here, just to clear -- we  
15 also had a work order system. So, to use your example, if the  
16 light bulb was out, you know, a person anywhere in the company  
17 could fill out a work order, submit it to the maintenance  
18 supervisor, manager, and he would, he would establish if somebody  
19 had free time or whatever to assign the task. So, there was a  
20 work order system.

21 MR. HOEPF: Okay. So, the maintenance manager, okay. I got  
22 you. So, how about, like, let's say there's a leaky toilet or  
23 something like that, you know, do you handle it in-house, or do  
24 you contract it out?

25 MR. SCHLOTT: This is Mark. Typically, we would call an

1 outside contractor in for that.

2 MR. HOEPF: Okay.

3 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, because the -- our maintenance staff  
4 would usually be busy with production-related activities. So,  
5 then we would call an outside contractor in to do that. So,  
6 again, maybe a work order is filled out, the maintenance manager  
7 or the plant manager is made aware of it, they call the  
8 contractor, the contractor comes in and makes a repair.

9 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Okay. So, that would be the -- typically,  
10 the maintenance manager would kind of be -- would be the one  
11 handling those --

12 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah --

13 MR. HOEPF: -- the work orders and then making that  
14 decision --

15 MR. SCHLOTT: Along with the plant --

16 MR. HOEPF: -- do we have the resources to handle that  
17 internally? Or, okay, or contract that out. Okay. All right. I  
18 got you. So, the -- I understand there's some -- there were some  
19 pipes connecting Building 1 to Building 2.

20 MR. SCHLOTT: Mm-hmm.

21 MR. HOEPF: And if -- I think we've already talked about  
22 those before, and a lot of details on that, but -- so, something  
23 like that, how would -- you know, how does the maintenance of  
24 something like that get handled? Is that within the plant  
25 manager?

1 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah. So, again, it's Mark. So, it would fall  
2 under, yeah, the management of the building. So, the plant  
3 manager and maintenance supervisor would be responsible for that.  
4 And again, they're static pipes. So, the only thing really that  
5 you had to maintain with the stainless-steel piping, the chocolate  
6 piping was, you know, heat tape that we replaced, you know. On an  
7 as needed or scheduled basis.

8 MR. HOEPF: Okay.

9 MR. SCHLOTT: But it's not -- there is no moving parts or  
10 anything like that that would, you know, need to be maintained.

11 MR. HOEPF: Yeah. Right. It's not a, yeah, machine. Yeah,  
12 I understand what you're saying. Okay. So, you know, part of  
13 this incident -- and I'll ask both you guys just to kind of  
14 comment briefly. Were you familiar with the distinction between  
15 customer piping versus jurisdictional piping?

16 MR. SCHLOTT: This is Mark. I did have an understanding that  
17 -- from my perspective that we were responsible for any of the  
18 piping inside our facilities. Anything outside the facilities was  
19 not our responsibility, was my understanding.

20 MR. WRIGHT: So, you were, you were aware of that --

21 MR. SMITH: I mean, same thing. It's just like being at your  
22 home.

23 MR. HOEPF: Yeah, okay. So, you guys understood that?

24 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

25 MR. HOEPF: Okay. So, what was, what was the approach to

1 maintaining customer piping?

2 MR. SCHLOTT: So, you're saying the stuff we were not  
3 responsible for?

4 MR. HOEPF: Customer piping, so, the piping that you were  
5 responsible for.

6 MR. SCHLOTT: Okay. So, basically, if we -- again, Mark --  
7 if we had a need -- and again, it would fall under the building  
8 supervision. So, it would, it would be the plant manager, so,  
9 maintenance personnel if there was a need, if there was a rebuild,  
10 or if there was an issue, they would be responsible for -- and  
11 typically, probably 99 percent of the time for what we're  
12 referring to here is they would call outside contractors in to  
13 work on this stuff. And I believe we identified that Berkshire  
14 Mechanical (ph.) --

15 MR. SMITH: Berkshire Mechanical, yeah.

16 MR. SCHLOTT: -- was the contractors that we've always used  
17 to do any type of those repairs in our facilities. That's not  
18 something our maintenance department would generally do.

19 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Yeah, you -- and you kind of got into my,  
20 you know -- I think you're kind of already answering my next  
21 question but, I mean, you know, is there, is there anything that  
22 your maintenance employees would try to do in terms of customer  
23 piping? Or is it an automatic it's a gas piping, that's just  
24 policy that, you know, we're going to contract that out. Would  
25 they -- sorry, go ahead.

1 MR. SCHLOTT: No.

2 MR. SMITH: No, no. If there's anything -- any questions  
3 like that, typically the maintenance manager would talk to the  
4 plant manager. And then from there, most of the -- I would say  
5 that they would not work on anything unless they were told to.  
6 And at that time for anything with gas piping, they won't -- from  
7 my understanding, none of that is done in-house. That's all done  
8 outside. We basically had a person that -- a Berkshire's  
9 dedicated person --

10 MR. SCHLOTT: Yup. For sure.

11 MR. SMITH: -- for our facility, and they took care of all  
12 that.

13 MR. SCHLOTT: Again, this is Mark. To the best of my  
14 knowledge, we've never had our internal maintenance staff work on  
15 that piping.

16 MR. HOEPF: Okay. And to your knowledge, they have never --

17 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

18 MR. HOEPF: Yeah. So, they've never, they've never attempted  
19 to initiate repair on a, on a gas --

20 MR. SCHLOTT: They might check for a leak, or you know, like  
21 if they -- you know, they could do some general -- but they would  
22 never physically take pipes apart.

23 MR. HOEPF: Okay. I got you. Well, and that was going to  
24 kind of be my next question. So, you wouldn't expect them to try  
25 to repair that, but you might -- you know, you wouldn't be



1 surprised if they were to try to find out where a leak was coming  
2 from? I don't know if -- do you have a policy on that or if  
3 they'd be on that (ph.)?

4 MR. SMITH: I don't recall a policy on that. I'm sure if  
5 they would have smelled something, they would have said something  
6 and then brought someone in. Yeah. Again, but there's no  
7 documentation or anything on that --

8 MR. HOEPF: Okay.

9 MR. SMITH: -- that I'm --

10 MR. SCHLOTT: Again, I concur with Logan. I think if there  
11 was an issue, they would have immediately called the contractor.  
12 You know, through their PMs, you know, if they were checking  
13 leaks, you know, just from a PM perspective, there's nothing  
14 formally put together to answer your question, but I'm sure time  
15 to time they would check something out. We had very little gas  
16 piping in Building 2. And it was just we had a domestic -- to the  
17 best of my knowledge, we had a domestic water heater, and two  
18 (indiscernible) heaters that were kind of small. There was no  
19 natural gas piping used for processing.

20 MR. HOEPF: Right.

21 MR. SCHLOTT: And there was no natural gas use for the  
22 production line at all. So, it was all just located in the  
23 basement of Building 2. It was not on the other two floors  
24 because they use steam to heat the building, radiators.

25 MR. HOEPF: So, it's -- I mean, it -- presumably, it would be

1 a pretty infrequent occurrence that there would be --

2 MR. SCHLOTT: Absolutely.

3 MR. HOEPF: -- some kind of maintenance that need to occur  
4 to --

5 MR. SCHLOTT: In Building 2.

6 MR. HOEPF: -- the customer, you know, side of the piping. I  
7 got you. I got you. Okay. But yeah, so it sounds like, it  
8 sounds like there wasn't a formal policy on specifically how  
9 that's handled.

10 MR. SCHLOTT: Handled. Yeah, there was not.

11 MR. HOEPF: And that's -- I mean, I don't want, I don't want  
12 to speculate here, but I mean, is that -- would you say that's  
13 kind of just because it wasn't really a part of the operation? I  
14 mean --

15 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, I mean, to -- again, this is Mark.  
16 Handling things internally, I mean, I think, you know, it was sort  
17 of an unwritten policy on how to handle it. I don't think it was  
18 ever formalized, but obviously, if there was any -- ever any  
19 indication that there was an issue, they would get management  
20 involved right away, as you know, whether it was the maintenance  
21 superintendent -- manager. The plant manager and shift supervisor  
22 immediately get maintenance involved and they would make a  
23 determination on how to handle that issue. It was not formalized,  
24 but it was, it was practiced, if that would make sense.

25 MR. HOEPF: Okay. So, you're -- I think you're saying, you

1 know, if anybody would smell gas, they would get -- they would let  
2 maintenance know.

3 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

4 MR. HOEPF: And then maintenance would kind of bubble that up  
5 to --

6 MR. SCHLOTT: The proper authority if they did --

7 MR. HOEPF: -- the maintenance manager --

8 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

9 MR. HOEPF: -- would then make a decision in terms of are we  
10 going to call a, you know -- the contractor or, you know, whatever  
11 they're going to do at that point?

12 MR. SMITH: Yeah. I mean, if it's a mechanic. If it's  
13 someone else, then the first thing they're doing is they're going  
14 to reach out to their lead supervisor, which the mechanic would be  
15 the next step. If there was a mechanic for each line --

16 MR. HOEPF: Oh, right. So, yeah. So, if the technicians  
17 were to --

18 MR. SMITH: Yep.

19 MR. HOEPF: -- smell gas, you would expect them to report  
20 that to their --

21 MR. SMITH: Yep.

22 MR. HOEPF: -- lead, and then you'd expect --

23 MR. SCHLOTT: Exactly.

24 MR. HOEPF: -- the lead to --

25 MR. SMITH: Yep.

1 MR. HOEPF: -- contact maintenance --

2 MR. SMITH: Escalate it.

3 MR. HOEPF: -- and they would kind of handle it from there.

4 Okay. Okay, great. I think that's all the questions I've got on  
5 that for right now. So, you know, and this is kind of a similar  
6 vein. I think this will go pretty quickly here. But in terms of  
7 the training and qualifications for your, for your maintenance  
8 employees, can you, can you talk about that? I mean, is this, you  
9 know -- is a lot of on-the-job training? Or do you hire people  
10 who have mechanical -- is there, is there any kind of  
11 qualification that they would have to work on those lines?

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You talking about the black box, you  
13 know --

14 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah. So, again, this is Mark. You know, we  
15 do a lot of on-the-job training and we do have special needs for  
16 our production. You know, we hire a -- we try to hire in-house  
17 HVAC folks, you know, because we have a lot of refrigeration.  
18 We'll try to hire a PLC technician because we got a lot of  
19 (indiscernible) controllers, they, you know, control the  
20 programmable logic of the machines.

21 So, we will hire specific needs or capabilities at times of  
22 maintenance, and then the general staff is basically -- it's a lot  
23 of in-house training that would take place, and then the buddy  
24 system in the very beginning. We do a mechanical aptitude test to  
25 hire folks where it's a structured machine that they untime. You

1 know, it's about timing and positioning and that sort of thing to  
2 sort of test mechanical aptitude before they're hired.

3 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Interesting. I got you. I got you. And  
4 so, I think you -- I think you've already commented on this, so, I  
5 don't want to just, you know, go into this too much, but it's not  
6 -- it's -- I presume it would not be a qualification to be trained  
7 in working on gas piping to become a mechanic for --

8 MR. SCHLOTT: No, not at all.

9 MR. HOEPF: Right. Okay. Because that's not within their  
10 scope.

11 MR. SCHLOTT: Sure.

12 MR. HOEPF: Okay. All right. And just to briefly touch on  
13 you know, some of the -- you know, some of your employees here,  
14 you know, in terms of their qualification. I presume that no one  
15 -- just let me know if this -- I'm wrong here, but would any of  
16 these employees have, you know, training, working on gas systems?  
17 Mike Brady (ph.), do you know of anything about -- he doesn't have  
18 any background working on gas systems? Or does he? Or do --  
19 would you, would you -- either of you --

20 MR. SCHLOTT: To the best of my knowledge, I wouldn't know.

21 MR. HOEPF: You wouldn't know, okay.

22 MR. SCHLOTT: He was, you know, long-time maintenance -- he  
23 was our senior maintenance mechanic. I believe he was here -- and  
24 I'm speculating -- it's close to 18 years or something. He was a  
25 long-time employee with us, so he was very familiar with

1 equipment, the location, how it normally operated. You know, he  
2 was a long-time employee, but he would have had the awareness of  
3 knowing, you know, where everything was located.

4 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Like do -- just be more specific. Again,  
5 I think I know the answer here, but do you know if he had any  
6 qualifications to work on gas systems?

7 MR. SMITH: No, no.

8 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, I don't, I don't know.

9 MR. SMITH: I don't think so.

10 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Okay. And then Jose Andujar (ph.)? Do  
11 you know if he had any qualifications or --

12 MR. SCHLOTT: No, he was only a mechanic. No.

13 MR. HOEPF: Okay. And then William Runyon (ph.).

14 MR. SMITH: He's not even in maintenance. He was a loader.

15 MR. SCHLOTT: He's just a general --

16 MR. WRIGHT: He's (indiscernible). Okay. And this is a  
17 previous employee, Steven Sassaman. Do you know if he had any  
18 qualifications to work on gas?

19 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah. So, Steve was our maintenance supervisor  
20 for many years, not only in that facility, but in this facility as  
21 well. He was a 40 some year employee that retired. So, a  
22 tremendous amount of knowledge about the equipment and the  
23 facilities. I can't speak to if he was ever formally trained on  
24 natural gas. I don't -- I wouldn't know.

25 MR. HOEPF: And that's okay. I don't want you to speculate.

1 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, no, I wouldn't --

2 MR. HOEPF: I completely understand if that's not within your  
3 scope of knowledge, so. Okay, great. So, next topic I want to  
4 talk a little bit about is the -- your side -- yesterday, we had  
5 an interview with UGI talking about public awareness. And I kind  
6 of want to get, you know, your take as a -- the affected public,  
7 you know, and kind of just get -- you know, what kind of safety  
8 information did you receive from UGI and what was the delivery of  
9 that information? And just kind of any other general comments you  
10 have.

11 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes. So, again, this is Mark. It's a great  
12 question. You know, obviously, there's much more awareness in our  
13 company and in our community now that this happened. I mean,  
14 there's no doubt about it, but previously, I believe they would  
15 correspond -- they would put something in the bill which would go  
16 into the finance department, which would even go to operations.

17 So, one of the things I would love to have come out of this  
18 is just more awareness and especially industrial places, because  
19 this just happened to happen in front of our facility. This could  
20 have been a mall, this could have been a fast-food restaurant,  
21 this could have been a lawyer's office, a doctor's office.

22 MR. HOEPF: Absolutely. Yeah.

23 MR. SCHLOTT: So, it's not just manufacturing based. It's  
24 based -- any business or -- you know, throughout the country. I  
25 think it'd be a great thing that there's more awareness on what to

1 do. We -- I don't want to get into it now, but we created our own  
2 policies now and it actually based it off the stuff that UGI would  
3 send out to make sure every employee knows what natural gas smells  
4 like as part of our annual training now. Now, we actually created  
5 sniff cards. We made our own, we found stickers, and we printed  
6 our own out.

7 MR. HOEPF: No kidding.

8 MR. SCHLOTT: We give it to everybody. We make them scratch  
9 it. They have to sign off that they understand it, and then we  
10 also put these cards in our common areas so that they can, they  
11 can have access to them at any time. I would love to see  
12 something like that happen everywhere throughout the country.

13 MR. HOEPF: And I'm always saying this in interviews, I don't  
14 want to put my opinion in too much into the record, but I think  
15 that's fantastic. I think it's a great post-accident action, you  
16 know, from my perspective. I'd love to see more companies do  
17 that.

18 MR. SCHLOTT: And I gladly will share some with you if you'd  
19 like some, to take them with.

20 MR. HOEPF: That's really great.

21 MR. SCHLOTT: Pretty good stuff.

22 MR. HOEPF: Yeah.

23 MR. SCHLOTT: It was hard to find scratch and sniff stickers,  
24 but we did it. We had our safety manager --

25 MR. HOEPF: And we will get a copy of this for the, for the



1 public docket to put it in there, but basically, it's a little  
2 scratch and sniff sticker. It says if you smell rotten eggs, it  
3 could be natural gas. This is what natural gas smells like, give  
4 that a little scratch --

5 MR. SCHLOTT: And then on the back, what to do.

6 MR. WRIGHT: -- and then, yeah, in the event of -- and the  
7 back, yeah. In the event of a gas leak, cease all operations,  
8 immediately communicate via page phone to evacuate the building  
9 for a gas leak. Do not switch off lights on -- do not switch  
10 lights on or off, evacuate immediately to your designated muster  
11 point. Call 911 or UGI as soon as safely as possible. So, great,  
12 thank you.

13 MR. SCHLOTT: Should be a requirement for every business.

14 MR. HOEPF: Yeah. Yeah. And I mean this is, this is right  
15 on, you know, what -- you know, the kind of stuff we're talking  
16 about here. So, thank you for sharing that.

17 MR. SMITH: This is, this is Logan. They -- we do have it in  
18 bilingual also.

19 MR. WRIGHT: You -- I'm sorry, you have what?

20 MR. SMITH: Bilingual.

21 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, I forgot about that.

22 MR. SMITH: Spanish.

23 MS. GUNARATNAM: They have it in bilingual.

24 MR. SCHLOTT: Bilingual, too.

25 MR. HOEPF: Oh, I'm sorry. Yeah. Okay. Right. So, this is

1 in Spanish, yeah.

2 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

3 MR. HOEPF: Excellent.

4 MR. SCHLOTT: Just in case.

5 MR. HOEPF: Yep, yep. That's great. That's great. So, you  
6 know, it sounds like, you know, UGI provided that information and,  
7 you know, when it went to the finance department -- you know, did  
8 -- I think I know the answer to this, but I mean did anybody ever  
9 -- was there any two-way communication with UGI about gas safety  
10 that anybody ever --

11 MR. SCHLOTT: No.

12 MR. HOEPF: -- called the company to say, hey, let me talk to  
13 Mark? Let me talk to the CEO or --

14 MR. SCHLOTT: No.

15 MR. HOEPF: -- you know, VP of safety or something like that.  
16 Let's talk about gas safety.

17 MR. SCHLOTT: No.

18 MR. SMITH: No.

19 MR. SCHLOTT: To the best of my knowledge, no.

20 MR. HOEPF: Okay, great. So, I understand this might not be  
21 -- I don't want you to speculate, but do you know what happened  
22 with the information that went -- so, presumably it was a bill.  
23 So, it went to the finance department. Do you know what the  
24 finance department would have done with that information?

25 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah. So, again, this is Mark. You know, they

1 get stacks and stacks of bills. Now, again, a lot of it now is  
2 electronic. So, there's less and less U.S. mail coming into the  
3 facility, but, you know, typically on a given day, there can be  
4 hundreds of envelopes coming here. And again, there'll be one  
5 scratch and sniff card for our entire company, right?

6 So, I think it should be based off of, you know, how many  
7 employees or how many people are actively working there, but with  
8 our folks, you know, it would just become they take the bill out  
9 and probably discard -- it's finance. They're not in operations.  
10 They're not even looking at what the communicative material would  
11 be.

12 So, that's a challenge where if you're doing it through the  
13 billing -- you know, and they are doing it through the billing,  
14 but it doesn't get to the right people, probably in organization.

15 MR. HOEPF: Yeah, no, I --

16 MR. SCHLOTT: It's an opportunity.

17 MR. HOEPF: I appreciate your, I appreciate your honesty. I  
18 mean, really. I mean, that's what -- we're just trying to improve  
19 safety here, and that's --

20 MR. SCHLOTT: And I'm all for --

21 MR. HOEPF: And that's one of the lessons --

22 MR. SCHLOTT: I'm all for --

23 MR. HOEPF: -- that we're kind of trying --

24 MR. SCHLOTT: Yep.

25 MR. HOEPF: -- to learn is -- you know, is what happens with

1 this stuff, you know, if UGI sends it out, it goes to maybe a  
2 finance department --

3 MR. SCHLOTT: A billing department that might not even be on  
4 site.

5 MR. HOEPF: -- and a billing department. And, you know, is  
6 it, is it, you know, really able to influence policy that way?  
7 You know, so maybe that's, you know, something else that's another  
8 opportunity for improvement there. So, I appreciate your honesty  
9 there in terms of just, you know, how that was likely handled.  
10 So, let me just ask about -- a couple questions about just, you  
11 know, for both -- I'll ask both of you comment briefly in terms of  
12 kind of your knowledge about natural gas. Prior to this incident.  
13 Were you, gentlemen, aware about how gas can reach a lower  
14 explosive limit inside the building and having a -- you know,  
15 cause an -- there's a hazard for an explosion? Did you gentlemen  
16 understand that prior to this incident?

17 MR. SCHLOTT: This is Mark. So, yes, I was born and raised  
18 in the city. So, I had -- that was part -- you know, natural gas  
19 was part of my life my whole life. And I -- yes, I did know that.  
20 I always thought it was around 5 percent or 10 percent mixture  
21 which would cause a room to become explosive.

22 MR. HOEPF: Okay.

23 MR. SCHLOTT: But yes, I've always been aware of gas.

24 MR. HOEPF: So, you were aware of that? Logan, were you --

25 MR. SMITH: Yeah, I'm aware of the smell. Again, I grew up

1 in Reading also, but as far as the percentage and the combustible  
2 limits and stuff like that, I did not know.

3 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Were you aware that there could be an  
4 explosion hazard if it's --

5 MR. SMITH: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Growing up, you know, you used  
6 to hear it all the time in the neighborhoods.

7 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Well, that was going to be my next  
8 question is, do you know how you became aware of that? Do you  
9 recall? I mean, it's -- you've probably known that for so long.

10 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

11 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah. There's been a couple instances. The  
12 one that comes to my mind was a post office here locally that had  
13 exploded a number of years ago. Fortunately, there was nobody  
14 there but --

15 MR. HOEPF: Got you. So, you were aware of part incidents  
16 where (indiscernible) exposed --

17 MR. SCHLOTT: Oh, yeah.

18 MR. SMITH: Oh, yeah.

19 MR. SCHLOTT: Pretty much.

20 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

21 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Let me ask another kind of general gas  
22 awareness question. Are you familiar with the methane natural gas  
23 detectors?

24 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes. Yes, I am. More so now, obviously, than  
25 I was previously.

1 MR. HOEPF: Okay.

2 MR. SCHLOTT: But yes.

3 MR. HOEPF: So, you -- do you -- you had -- had you -- can  
4 you give me any details in terms of prior to the incident, you  
5 know --

6 MR. SCHLOTT: So, prior to the incident, you know, I was  
7 aware of these detection systems, and we did start installing some  
8 of them throughout some of our facilities.

9 MR. HOEPF: Oh, really? Okay. You would actually started  
10 installing some.

11 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes. There were some that were installed over  
12 here in our, in our Wyomissing facility. There was -- it was a  
13 process that, you know, we were starting to get through that  
14 Obviously, there was none in the Building 2's basement. And  
15 again, I think -- I'm speculating here, which I shouldn't do, but  
16 we use very little natural gas in there. So, I don't think it was  
17 a priority for our team at the time -- for our production team,  
18 plant manager, and maintenance team at the time.

19 MR. HOEPF: Right. Well, again, this is just about, you  
20 know, safe -- improving safety and general awareness, there's no,  
21 there's no federal requirement, you know, for those types of  
22 detectors. And, you know, NTSB of course is trying to change  
23 that, but, you know, I'm just trying to cover safety. You were  
24 aware of methane, you know, detectors and actually had started --  
25 so, that's helpful for me just to get that context. Logan, were

1 you -- can you comment? Were you aware of these types of  
2 detectors?

3 MR. SMITH: Not before the incident, but after the incident.  
4 Yeah. I mean, we cleaned house and pretty much had them --

5 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah. So, yeah, after the incident -- this is  
6 Mark again -- we -- any area that we deemed a confined space, we  
7 removed all gas appliances. So, we create -- we changed from  
8 natural gas heat to steam heat. That was a big initiative for a  
9 couple of weeks. You know, we wanted to make every facility safe  
10 and -- you know, from our learnings of what happened over there,  
11 we never want it to be repeated again.

12 So, any, any confined space we removed the natural gas or  
13 made sure detectors were installed in that. We have dehumidifying  
14 equipment in our warehouse, it's 350,000 square foot. It was --  
15 when we did some research on that, they said, look, it's such a  
16 big open area that, you know, they won't be needed in that area.  
17 We would have more time to react to something, but anything that  
18 we deemed confined space or a smaller room we -- we've already  
19 addressed.

20 MR. HOEPF: Got you. Got you. You said -- you're saying  
21 these are post-accident actions that you're all --

22 MR. SCHLOTT: These were posted accident, not pre. But  
23 before that, we did have detectors in some other areas that we  
24 would use.

25 MR. HOEPF: Do you --

1 MR. SCHLOTT: Natural gas.

2 MR. HOEPF: Do you -- again, I don't want you to speculate or  
3 anything, but I mean, was that something you personally said, hey,  
4 let's get some methane detectors? Was that --

5 MR. SCHLOTT: No.

6 MR. HOEPF: -- you know, an initiative from your safety  
7 department?

8 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah.

9 MR. HOEPF: Do you know --

10 MR. SCHLOTT: I think -- and again, this is Mark. I think we  
11 put a new boiler -- and this is what comes to mind, might have  
12 been 10, 15 years ago. I don't remember the timing, but it was in  
13 the building, a big boiler in the building. So, they put  
14 detection on it because it was inside the building.

15 MR. HOEPF: Oh, okay.

16 MR. SCHLOTT: The boiler in Building 1 was outside on its  
17 own. It wasn't inside internal into the building.

18 MR. HOEPF: I got you. So, that was probably part of the  
19 decision-making process --

20 MR. SCHLOTT: The engineering process with group.

21 MR. HOEPF: -- where they kind of recognize the risk  
22 associated with that --

23 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

24 MR. HOEPF: -- equipment. And --

25 MR. SCHLOTT: Exactly.



1 MR. HOEPF: -- generate some discussion on methane detection,  
2 so.

3 MR. SCHLOTT: Exactly.

4 MR. HOEPF: Okay, great. Thank you. Just a final question  
5 on this topic and I'll let both of you gentlemen comment here,  
6 but, you know, do you -- I think you kind of already touched on  
7 this, but, you know, do you think the information and the delivery  
8 methods, you know, were adequate? You know, in terms of public  
9 awareness? I mean, is there, is there anything else you want to  
10 say in terms of -- or just, or just in general things that you  
11 think could be better?

12 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, I -- you know, this is, this is Mark. I  
13 mean, obviously it was inadequate, you know, if this accident  
14 happened. So, I think we all got to make it part of our mission  
15 to improve it. Everyone, because we never want this to happen  
16 again. So, you know, the answer to that question is, you know,  
17 no, it wasn't adequate because this accident happened.

18 MR. HOEPF: Mm-hmm. Is there anything, you know, that you  
19 would like to see -- you know, utilities like UGI do different in  
20 terms of the public awareness programs?

21 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, I think what we discussed here, I think  
22 that should be required. And I think that even if we got to get  
23 state and federal officials involved in this, you know, to say  
24 that I think any business -- and again it's focused because we're  
25 a manufacturer. So, you know, in the very beginning, everybody

1 thought it was a manufacturing process, but it wasn't. This could  
2 have happened anywhere. It could have happened in front of a  
3 home, a doctor's office.

4       When I went to my doctor, you know -- because I was at the  
5 front door when this happened and so, I got knocked around a  
6 little bit, but when I went to my doctor, I said to him because he  
7 was asking me, I said -- you know, his name's Zach (ph.), great  
8 guy, but he's in a big facility. And I said, you know, do you  
9 know where your natural gas meter is? He said, no. I said, you  
10 know what natural gas service you have in the building? He said,  
11 no. I said, you know where the gas lines are? He said, no. I  
12 said, exactly.

13       MR. HOEPF: Yeah.

14       MR. SCHLOTT: Right? Because it's a big office building and  
15 I'm not saying that to be -- you know, I'm saying it because I  
16 care that, you know, there's -- we need to create more awareness  
17 through this.

18       MR. HOEPF: Right. Yeah. No, this is not, this is not about  
19 blame or anything.

20       MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah.

21       MR. HOEPF: It's just about, you know, again, awareness and  
22 where the, you know, where the -- so, how about you, Logan? What  
23 do you, what do you think?

24       MR. SMITH: I agree with Mark. I mean, there's always an  
25 opportunity for improvement and just for the people that I

1 associate with, you know, even the local church. And I, I mean, I  
2 go to a big church. I -- you know, I'm part of the committee  
3 there and I brought this up because they asked me about it. And I  
4 said, do we have anything in place? Do we have any practices?  
5 And no, no, no, but you know, you're looking at a church that, you  
6 know, you have 400 people in, you know?

7       So, you know, because UGI, they do have a program and it's  
8 out there. It's -- the problem is I don't know if enough people  
9 are aware of it. And more needs to be done so more people are  
10 aware of it. I think more checks need to be done. More  
11 confirmation on UGI's side. Hey, did you receive this? That type  
12 of thing, maybe there's something there. I don't, I don't know,  
13 but I've been a UGI customer, and I have seen an improvement more  
14 noticed, but in the past, I didn't see it.

15       MR. HOEPF: Yeah. Okay.

16       MR. SMITH: Or I wasn't aware of it.

17       MR. HOEPF: Do you. So, I guess just to confirm this, and  
18 we'll move on from this topic, but it sounds like neither one of  
19 you gentlemen personally received those safety messages from UGI.

20       MR. SCHLOTT: No.

21       MR. SMITH: No, I hadn't.

22       MR. SCHLOTT: I hadn't.

23       MR. HOEPF: Okay. Because I was going to -- my question was  
24 going to be, do you recall the specific -- do you recall the  
25 content of those safety messages? But I don't believe that

1 question applies because you didn't receive --

2 MR. SCHLOTT: We did not.

3 MR. HOEPF: You personally --

4 MR. SCHLOTT: I personally did not receive --

5 MR. HOEPF: -- did not receive that information.

6 MR. SCHLOTT: That is correct.

7 MR. HOEPF: Okay. All right. Enough said on that, for now  
8 anyway. Does anybody -- do you need a break?

9 MR. SCHLOTT: I'm good.

10 MR. HOEPF: You need a break?

11 MR. SMITH: I'm good.

12 MR. HOEPF: You guys doing okay? You guys doing okay? Okay.  
13 I've got one more kind of general topic, and then I'm -- before I  
14 turn over to Rachel. You're doing okay, Rachel?

15 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah.

16 MR. HOEPF: Okay, all right. So -- and we don't need to  
17 spend a ton of time on any one of these things, but I just kind of  
18 want to talk a little bit about, you know, Palmer Company safety  
19 policies, things like that. So, do you -- and then I'll ask each  
20 one of you to comment briefly on what your role is, but, you know,  
21 what is your, what is your role in the development of, you know,  
22 safety policies?

23 MR. SCHLOTT: So, again, this is Mark. My role is to fully  
24 support, you know, a safe operation. We -- that morning we had a  
25 meeting, Logan was participating in that meeting, and I say -- in

1 newsletters I say any time I can, there's nothing more important  
2 to food safety than people safety and there's not one pound of  
3 chocolate worth it. And you know, I said it that morning, and Sue  
4 and Amy were in that meeting. You know, we lost them hours later.

5 And, you know, we -- it -- my job is to instill to everybody  
6 that, you know, we have a safe operation here and that we support  
7 each other and that I fund and budget anything that's needed to  
8 make sure that that's essential. That that happens and it's  
9 essential. We have a very good safety culture here at the  
10 company. We really do, and I'm proud of it. But I mean, is  
11 that --

12 MR. SMITH: Yeah, that's right. And it's Logan here. For  
13 myself, I would have get minutes on different safety committees  
14 and they would share that with me when we have our -- if there was  
15 any -- every time we, every time we had a monthly supervisor  
16 meeting -- we would get second and third shift together. First  
17 thing we talked about is employee safety and food safety. When we  
18 have our, what I call our lead and line tech meetings, which is  
19 once a month, same thing. We always start out with that first.

20 So, I would hear, you know, whatever issues there are on that  
21 end. And then of course, I would report that to whoever it needs  
22 to be reported to, to get things fixed right away. So, we did  
23 have a safety committee there. I would also help Amy with  
24 anything as far as, if any reports from OSHA or something like  
25 that, because I had a lot of experience as the food safety manager

1 with audits and things like that when we have audits. So, she'd  
2 run things by me, say, hey, this is, you know, because some of it  
3 pertained to the actual production processes, you know, integrated  
4 -- or interactive (indiscernible). So, I would help, I would help  
5 her with that. For as far as the responses and the corrective  
6 actions.

7 MR. HOEPF: I got you. I got you. You were talking about  
8 OSHA audits?

9 MR. SMITH: Yeah, yeah. I mean, this a manufacturing, you  
10 know, you get just an employee who's, you know, wants to say,  
11 okay, we're not doing this, not doing that, whatever it is. I  
12 would help investigate those things.

13 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Okay. I got you. So, and again, just to  
14 kind of, just kind to of break this down a little bit. So, you've  
15 got a safety committee?

16 MR. SMITH: Yes.

17 MR. HOEPF: Okay. And they meet monthly.

18 MR. SMITH: Yes.

19 MR. HOEPF: Okay.

20 MR. SMITH: And the plant, the plant manager -- and plant  
21 manager and the HR manager oversee that.

22 MR. SCHLOTT: The director, HR director.

23 MR. SMITH: Director, sorry. Director, Amy was the director.

24 MR. HOEPF: Okay, so, there's the -- that's -- the leaders of  
25 that group are the plant manager -- can we talk a little bit about

1 where they are in the chain of command? But then you said also  
2 the HR director?

3 MR. SMITH: Correct.

4 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Okay. And that would have been Amy you  
5 said?

6 MR. SMITH: Yes.

7 MR. HOEPF: What's her last name?

8 MR. SCHLOTT: Sandoe.

9 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Got you. And then, yeah, just tell me a  
10 little bit about the safety committee.

11 MR. SMITH: Basically, what they would do there is -- there's  
12 representatives from each line. There's one for maintenance,  
13 there's one for line techs. There's, you know, packers. And  
14 basically, what they do is weekly, they do safety audits. So,  
15 they walk around, and they have a week to complete them. And when  
16 they get to -- if they find something right away, they -- of  
17 course, they report that to a supervisor, a supervisor signs off  
18 on it and it gets completed. By the way it gets documented.

19 And then what they do is when they meet, when they meet the  
20 next time, they bring all that information together. Yes, there  
21 was a corrective action, but is there a way we can make it a  
22 preventative action? You know, things like that, that's kind of  
23 kind of what they would do, basically, in a nutshell.

24 MR. HOEPF: Okay. So, the safety committee actually you have  
25 your own sort of safety audits --

1 MR. SCHLOTT: Yep.

2 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

3 MR. HOEPF: -- that you do.

4 MR. SMITH: Safety checks.

5 MR. HOEPF: Okay. And you come back the next meeting, you  
6 kind of close the loop and do what you -- okay.

7 MR. SCHLOTT: And anything that was identified, if there's an  
8 -- this is Mark -- an extension cord on the floor that should be  
9 taken care of immediately, so that's what he was referring to, get  
10 with the supervisor to make sure that safety infraction or  
11 condition is rectified immediately.

12 MR. HOEPF: Okay. I got you. And then you said you got the  
13 minutes, you know, kind of, it's kind of the documentation of --

14 MR. SMITH: Yes.

15 MR. HOEPF: -- what's going on there. Okay. Okay. The --  
16 so do you have a safety department, so to speak? Or are the  
17 safety roles filled by, you know, other individuals like --

18 MR. SMITH: Yeah, it's a combination of -- safety is  
19 everybody's responsibility, but the ones who kind of lead it was  
20 always the plant manager and the HR director. HR director had the  
21 policies, practices, then manager made sure that things were  
22 implemented, and things were being addressed.

23 MR. HOEPF: Okay.

24 MR. SMITH: Now, recently, we did hire a safety manager after  
25 this.



1 MR. HOEPF: Okay. So, it's --

2 MR. SMITH: So, now we have an official safety manager to  
3 take the load off because once you know, Sue and, you know --

4 MR. SCHLOTT: We lost Sue -- this is Mark. We lost Sue and  
5 Amy, so, we lost that competency. So, we had a -- we had to  
6 replace that competency to make sure that we can continue to  
7 operate safely.

8 MR. HOEPF: Mm-hmm. Understood. Absolutely. So, those --  
9 so, you know, prior to this. So, they would be direct reports to  
10 you, Logan? Or would you, Mark also, you know, talk directly with  
11 them in terms of, you know, what's going on --

12 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, so --

13 MR. HOEPF: -- safety? You know, is it -- do you -- you kind  
14 of -- do you get your kind of reports from Logan or do you talk  
15 directly to --

16 MR. SCHLOTT: Good question. Part of our senior management  
17 team, that would be brought up and if there was anything  
18 identified -- again, anything immediate, we get taken care of  
19 immediately, but if there was -- say there is an opportunity, it  
20 could be part of, part of our strategic plan or maybe a short-term  
21 objective through our strategic planning, you know, with my senior  
22 management group. You know, so, all the people would be at -- all  
23 the senior managers be at the table and we -- you know, we would  
24 share this together.

25 MR. HOEPF: Got you.

1 MR. SCHLOTT: So, that -- but -- makes something -- the  
2 parking lot has a big crack in it, you know, we need to replace  
3 the parking lot. Okay. That'd be -- that might be a strategic  
4 objective to say, okay, from our capital funds, we're going to  
5 replace this parking lot in the spring because we deem it to be a  
6 trip hazard. I'm making stuff up, but to give you an idea of how  
7 that would work.

8 MR. HOEPF: Yeah. Okay. I got you. So, they're a part of  
9 that group?

10 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah. So, we would come --

11 (Crosstalk)

12 MR. SCHLOTT: They were part of the senior management team.  
13 Sue and Amy were part of our senior management.

14 MR. SMITH: Right.

15 MR. HOEPF: Okay.

16 MR. SMITH: And this is Logan. We meet monthly. And that  
17 would be part of their agenda, if you want to say that.

18 MR. HOEPF: Oh, okay.

19 MR. SMITH: You know, safety. You know, here's safety. We  
20 have -- we all have different, you know, agendas --

21 MR. SCHLOTT: Buckets.

22 MR. SMITH: -- buckets we want to talk about.

23 MR. SCHLOTT: Buckets, responsibility.

24 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

25 MR. HOEPF: Okay. So, there's a, there's a safety committee

1 meeting but then there's also the senior management meeting, and  
2 then safety is one of the topics within that.

3 MR. SCHLOTT: Exactly.

4 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Okay, I got you.

5 MR. SCHLOTT: Food safety and employee safety.

6 MR. HOEPF: And those are the two -- those are kind of the  
7 two main buckets of --

8 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

9 MR. HOEPF: -- is the employee safety and then food safety.

10 MR. SCHLOTT: Food safety because we're, you know, a food  
11 manufacturer, obviously.

12 MR. HOEPF: Got you. And then the HR Director is kind of the  
13 main contact point with the OSHA --

14 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes, on the people safety side.

15 MR. WRIGHT: On the people safety side.

16 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah. It would be the HR Director, Amy Sandoe  
17 was -- had that responsibility.

18 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Got you. Got you. So, the -- would  
19 either one of you ever sit directly in the safety committee  
20 meeting or?

21 MR. SMITH: Yeah. Yeah.

22 MR. HOEPF: You would, okay. You would --

23 MR. SMITH: Yeah, not all -- most of the time it was in, it  
24 was in Building 3 because I spent the majority of my time over  
25 Building 3. Just because it's a larger facility, but I make,

1 I make -- like, again, when we would have our staff meetings with  
2 the supervisors, HR Director, once a month, I would be in that  
3 building there. And again, that's when we would talk about first  
4 thing, food safety and employee safety. So, I kind of get updates  
5 right there.

6 MR. HOEPF: Okay. I got you. I got you. And then are there  
7 any other, like, major safety programs? I mean, just -- I'm just  
8 kind of asking, is there a thing we, you know, haven't discussed  
9 that we should in terms of, you know, the major like programs or  
10 things like that.

11 MR. SMITH: This is Logan. Though, the one thing I do want  
12 to add is the minutes were always posted on our communication  
13 board so everyone could see them.

14 MR. HOEPF: Okay. And then -- yeah, where did -- so, where  
15 do you post those?

16 MR. SMITH: It would -- there's different areas that they  
17 would have posted. You would, you would see them at different  
18 levels of our building, we had like three levels. When you walked  
19 down the hallway, you could see it there. And in the front of the  
20 break room, you would see it. That's another spot.

21 MR. HOEPF: Okay.

22 MR. SCHLOTT: And they're clearly -- this is Mark -- clear  
23 identified as safety.

24 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

25 MR. SCHLOTT: Like there's a portion there just for safety so

1 that if people wanted to look, you know. And they're -- they  
2 would post different things, the committee and stuff, you know,  
3 could be home safety, it could be holiday safety, even just always  
4 a constant safety message.

5 MR. HOEPF: Okay. And so -- and that was in all -- that's in  
6 all buildings?

7 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

8 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

9 MR. SCHLOTT: All the buildings.

10 MR. HOEPF: Okay, great. Great. So, getting to the end of  
11 my questions here, the -- if an employee has a safety concern how  
12 does that work? Do they -- tell me, tell me about what do they  
13 do?

14 MR. SMITH: They basically -- what would they do if it's a --  
15 it's an immediate concern, they always reach out to the lead and  
16 supervisors. Now, they also -- what they do is when they're doing  
17 their -- when I say they, the safety committee members do their  
18 checks, the employees know that, okay, when you see they're doing  
19 the checks, reach out to them if there's an issue, but again, we  
20 have a work order process also.

21 We use that, we use that process as a way also, but if it's a  
22 serious safety concern, it gets taken care of right away. That's  
23 the message that we send on our GMP annual training and our safety  
24 training that we do.

25 MR. SCHLOTT: Again, this is Mark. They'll -- the production

1 line or whatever is shut down immediately so that it's addressed.  
2 You know, and this -- shift people have total authority to do that  
3 as they see fit. You know, they have the authority to do all  
4 that.

5 MR. HOEPF: So, if it's an immediate safety concern, they'll  
6 deal with it right away. And then if it's something that's maybe  
7 more of a not pressing concern, but just something that somebody  
8 reports, it -- is that, is that the same, you know, work order  
9 system that you would use to track if, like I said, a leaky toilet  
10 or light going out or something like that? Is it that they  
11 basically put it into the -- you have a system or something?

12 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah. This is Mark. It could be, it really  
13 depends on the situation. I'll give you an example, maybe this  
14 will help you. So, Sue approached me back last fall. Mark Baxter  
15 (ph.), who happened to be one of the individuals that was involved  
16 in this, an outside contractor, reported that there was a small  
17 brick that -- just a small piece of brick that fell on the  
18 building. And when we went outside, we saw that it was sort of  
19 delaminating a little bit. So, Sue brought it to my attention, we  
20 immediately authorized \$30,000. We had contractors there in a  
21 couple of weeks to repoint some of the bricks.

22 So, even an outside contractor or somebody, you know, outside  
23 the facility, if they would see something, they would report it to  
24 the proper chain. And if Sue didn't have the funds or the budget  
25 to take care of something, then she would ratchet it up to senior

1 management and we would determine what to do. And again, when it  
2 comes to stuff like that, it was public safety. We immediately  
3 authorized that expense.

4 MR. HOEPF: Got you. Got you.

5 MR. SMITH: Say, there's a -- Logan here -- say there's a  
6 railing or something loose, right? So, it'd be reported. So,  
7 first thing we would do, we'd tape it off or whatnot, and then  
8 hang a sign, but then what we would do is also use that work order  
9 process as a source of documentation. So, there's an  
10 (indiscernible) for forgetting about because there is an area  
11 there you can hit, you know, for safety. And that way it gets  
12 prioritized through the work order system.

13 MR. HOEPF: Okay. So, I'm struggling to think of a good  
14 example here, but if somebody had a safety issue that was not tied  
15 to a physical, you know, issue --

16 MR. SCHLOTT: So, an unsafety act.

17 MR. WRIGHT: Yeah. An unsafe act, yeah. I saw somebody --  
18 they're not following the right process.

19 MR. SCHLOTT: They reached their hand in an -- in the -- over  
20 a guard into a machine.

21 MR. HOEPF: Yeah, something like that. Yeah. Do you have,  
22 do you have a way to track, you know, those kind of concerns?

23 MR. SMITH: Yeah. Typically, what they would do if it's an  
24 occurrence, what we have is an incident report that can filled out  
25 so that individual, you know, if that's seen, you know, even to

1 report it right away to a supervisor, supervisor do an incident  
2 report, that's documentation. So then, you have that  
3 documentation, in case you need that if it's an act that happens  
4 again or something like that. Or we would look at maybe since  
5 that was done that way, do we need to put a bar there so that they  
6 can't reach in there, that kind of stuff?

7 MR. SCHLOTT: We do -- again, this is Mark. We have  
8 disciplined folks for egregious things in the past, not often, but  
9 we've already terminated folks for egregious safety violations.

10 MR. HOEPF: Okay.

11 MR. SCHLOTT: I can't think of any lately, but I am aware --  
12 I've been here 37 years, I am aware of folks that have been  
13 terminated for egregious safety acts. You know, jeopardize not  
14 only their safety, but the safety of others.

15 MR. HOEPF: Yeah, how about, how about if a technician, you  
16 know, again, I'm struggling to think of a good example, but what  
17 if they had a concern about their supervisor? Would they have any  
18 -- they have anything that they can do to report that?

19 MR. SCHLOTT: This is Mark. Great question. We have an  
20 open-door policy all the way to my door. The employees come over  
21 to see me whenever they want and again, I'm in the factory as  
22 well.

23 MR. HOEPF: Okay. So, they can just come straight to you.

24 MR. SCHLOTT: They can come right to me. They can come right  
25 to me.



1 MR. SMITH: Yeah, yeah.

2 MR. SCHLOTT: Absolutely.

3 MR. HOEPF: All right.

4 MR. SCHLOTT: And right to Logan.

5 MR. SMITH: Yeah. I mean, yeah. I mean, that's why you  
6 build those relationships, and that's why I'm on the floor because  
7 if -- you're not noticing, they're not going to.

8 MR. HOEPF: Yeah, right. Okay, great. So, the last question  
9 for me for now is the -- in some of the interviews this point  
10 system came up, and we just wanted to get the -- get, you know --  
11 to be fair, we want to get the perspective from --

12 MR. SCHLOTT: For attendance?

13 MR. HOEPF: Yeah. And that's going to be one of my  
14 questions, is this basically just an attendance system?

15 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah.

16 MR. HOEPF: Or is this -- can you, can you tell me about  
17 that?

18 MR. SCHLOTT: This is, this is Mark. So, again, we -- you  
19 know, every, I think, business has some sort of attendance policy.  
20 Our attendance policy is super, super liberal. I believe --  
21 again, if an employee qualifies for FMLA or has, you know, doctor  
22 sort of things, but an employee calls off and says, I'm not coming  
23 to work today, they would receive a point.

24 They don't -- nothing happens to them until they get to eight  
25 points and then it's like just a written counseling, hey, you're

1 getting to that point. I believe we get to ten points before  
2 somebody is suspended. And then if you hit 11, you can be  
3 terminated. Now, they also receive PTO after five years, they  
4 receive personal holidays. So, people that are with us that  
5 worked weekends actually are receiving 240 hours of PTO plus 16  
6 hours of personal holidays, you know, that are with us, say, 30  
7 years plus.

8       You know, a new employee, they get two weeks and they're  
9 allowed three vacation call offs in a calendar year, so something  
10 comes up, you know, child sick, husband sick, whatever they can  
11 call and say, I want to use a vacation call off day. So, it's not  
12 a, not a point, and they get paid for it, eight hours. So, think  
13 of it as three -- we call them vacation call offs. It could be  
14 personal days, it could be sick days. So, they also receive that.  
15 So, if the totality of all that plus if they qualify for, if they  
16 qualify for FMLA, that's 12 weeks. So, the totality of all that  
17 is -- it's really up.

18       MR. SMITH: This is Logan and I'm going to add this. And  
19 after 2,000 hours they lose a point. If they work --

20       MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, if they work 2,000 hours, the point comes  
21 off.

22       MR. SMITH: Yep.

23       MR. SCHLOTT: It's by worked hours.

24       MR. HOEPF: Okay. So --

25       MR. SCHLOTT: And one more thing -- I got --

1 MR. HOEPF: No, yeah, please.

2 MR. SCHLOTT: -- one more thing, I apologize. And also, if  
3 they work 1,000 hours in a row without missing any time, they get  
4 a perfect attendance day, which is 8 hours paid off, which is kind  
5 of an anomaly, right? So, you have perfect attendance and we're  
6 giving you a day off.

7 MR. HOEPF: Okay.

8 MR. SCHLOTT: Okay. So, there's a lot of opportunity for  
9 them.

10 MR. HOEPF: Yeah. So, a new -- just to recap, so a new  
11 employee comes in, they've got two weeks. They've got 80 hours --

12 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

13 MR. HOEPF: -- you know of just time off --

14 MR. SCHLOTT: PTO time.

15 MR. HOEPF: They can, they can take off --

16 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, they have to schedule it --

17 MR. HOEPF: -- they have to schedule it.

18 MR. SCHLOTT: -- and there's some policies, because, you  
19 know, we can't let everybody take off and keep the facility  
20 running but they schedule it with the supervisor, their lead  
21 person, the supervisor, and they follow the policies.

22 MR. HOEPF: Okay. So, the, so the three days you're talking  
23 about. So, that's scheduled. Okay, I'm going to take a vacation,  
24 I want to go to the beach or whatever.

25 MR. SCHLOTT: You got it.

1 MR. HOEPF: But then -- so you're saying is you also have a  
2 bucket of three days that they get per year --

3 MR. HOEPF: Per calendar year.

4 MR. HOEPF: -- per calendar year, which is, my school called,  
5 I have to go take care of my kid or whatever.

6 MR. SCHLOTT: Yep, exactly.

7 MR. HOEPF: So, that's for the pop-up stuff.

8 MR. SCHLOTT: They don't -- do not receive a point and they  
9 actually get paid for it as well.

10 MR. HOEPF: So, they get paid. So, three times a year they  
11 can, they can call -- they can say, you know, something popped up  
12 and they just have the day off. They can get paid and have those  
13 days off.

14 MR. SCHLOTT: Exactly.

15 MR. HOEPF: Okay. That's the new employees, and then it  
16 accrues from there.

17 MR. SCHLOTT: Right, so --

18 MR. HOEPF: Okay. And then -- I'm sorry, go on.

19 MR. SCHLOTT: No, I'm sorry. No, seven years, I believe, you  
20 get three weeks' vacation. 14 years, you get four. 20 years, you  
21 get five weeks' vacation. And then if you work weekends, there's  
22 a, there's a system that you accumulate more hours. So, like the  
23 maintenance, mechanics, and folks that work a lot of Saturdays and  
24 that, they also -- they'll receive up to another 40 hours of  
25 vacation. So, then they're receiving six weeks of vacation plus

1 two personal holidays.

2 MR. HOEPF: Okay. So, the people who have --

3 MR. SCHLOTT: Plus perfect attendance days, plus --

4 MR. HOEPF: I'm assuming this isn't a problem for the senior  
5 employees, then. It's --

6 MR. SCHLOTT: No.

7 MR. HOEPF: Okay. But going back to -- so, just going back  
8 to the new employees, you know. So, is the -- yeah. So, let's  
9 say they're sick. Like if somebody has -- they have a cold, you  
10 know, so, do they, do they get a point then or --

11 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, if they call off from work and say I'm  
12 not coming to work, I don't feel good or whatever. Yeah, then  
13 they would receive a point.

14 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Now how about, let's say -- well, COVID's  
15 kind of a bad example because it's kind of a --

16 MR. SCHLOTT: Right, nothing --

17 MR. HOEPF: But let's just say it's a -- let's say it's a  
18 vanilla flavored cold, but it's a legitimate cold, you know, and  
19 they don't want to come in and breathe on people. They go to the  
20 doctor and get a note that says so-and-so was sick or something.  
21 Now, do they -- does -- do you remove the point that they  
22 incurred?

23 MR. SCHLOTT: Typically, our policy right now does not do  
24 that. Because again, they're allowed eight. So, they could be  
25 out almost two weeks, you know, without -- nothing happens to

1 them.

2 MR. HOEPF: Right. But doesn't have that -- doesn't have to  
3 be scheduled though? The two weeks, you know, off?

4 MR. SCHLOTT: The vacation, yeah, but they would also have  
5 the three vacation call off days. So, I mean, like --

6 MR. HOEPF: I should say, they've already -- okay. They've  
7 already gone through the three -- yeah. So, they have three days  
8 that they can call and be sick. So, the fourth time in the year  
9 where they get a cold and they have -- so, then they get a point.

10 MR. SCHLOTT: Right. They would get a point. Now again, if  
11 they're out one day or two days, nothing happens to them. It's  
12 just a point system. Nothing happens. You know? There's no --  
13 they have --

14 MR. HOEPF: So, if they --

15 MR. SCHLOTT: -- you have to -- you know, we have to track.

16 MR. HOEPF: Yeah. No, I mean, I understand. I mean, you  
17 know, I again, I'm not trying to sound critical. I'm just trying  
18 to just --

19 MR. SCHLOTT: Understand.

20 MR. HOEPF: -- actually understand, you know, how this works.  
21 So, say that they've got a cold, they're sick, they need two days  
22 off, so they get two points?

23 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes, it's a point per day.

24 MR. WRIGHT: Okay. And so, they can continue doing that up  
25 until -- nothing really happens for the first seven days --

1 MR. SCHLOTT: Seven, yeah.

2 MR. HOEPF: -- that they miss.

3 MR. SCHLOTT: And then even the eighth day, it's just like a  
4 -- like, an awareness thing, hey, you're at, you're at eight  
5 points. We want to -- you know, HR would meet with them just to  
6 say, just, you need to recognize you're at eight points.

7 MR. HOEPF: Okay so it's not really -- it's just --

8 MR. SCHLOTT: There's no discipline.

9 MR. HOEPF: -- it's just, yeah -- it's more about letting  
10 them know --

11 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

12 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

13 MR. HOEPF: -- that, hey, you're -- you've crept up here in  
14 points --

15 MR. SCHLOTT: It's a warning.

16 MR. HOEPF: -- and if you -- yeah, if you keep going, then  
17 you could face, you know, some issues there. Okay. And then in  
18 terms of the points going away, so, you said that's -- is it, is  
19 it 2,000 --

20 MR. SCHLOTT: Worked hours.

21 MR. HOEPF: You said it's 2,000 hours and I'm sorry, I'm bad  
22 with math off the top of my head. What -- how many, how many  
23 weeks is that about?

24 MR. SCHLOTT: So, 50.

25 MR. HOEPF: So, 50 weeks. Okay.

1 MR. SCHLOTT: 50 weeks.

2 MR. HOEPF: Okay. So, is it after 50 weeks it just -- do you  
3 wipe the slate clean? Or is it one point goes away?

4 MR. SCHLOTT: One point goes away. So, if you had back-to-  
5 back days, so Monday, you would lose one point, Tuesday, you would  
6 lose the next.

7 MR. HOEPF: Okay. I see. It's not, it's not 2,000 hours per  
8 point. It's 2,000 hours from --

9 MR. SCHLOTT: It's 2,000 hours per point. You were right in  
10 what you said, but if you took it back-to-back -- you know, if the  
11 first one is relieved at 2,000 hours, you only need 8 more hours  
12 for the second one to be relieved.

13 MR. HOEPF: Okay. So, it's -- well, yeah, so -- okay, so,  
14 you know, a year goes by and then -- so, you would effectively --  
15 I mean, both points would go away --

16 MR. SCHLOTT: Sure.

17 MR. HOEPF: -- basically --

18 MR. SCHLOTT: Sure.

19 MR. HOEPF: --you know. So, it's kind of like -- it kind of  
20 -- it sounds like it kind of resets --

21 MR. SCHLOTT: It does.

22 MR. HOEPF: -- effectively --

23 MR. SCHLOTT: It does. And this is all --

24 MR. HOEPF: -- over the course of the year.

25 MR. SCHLOTT: Now, again, if they came back and they work six



1 months straight, you know, 40 hours a week, thousand hours  
2 straight without any -- they would receive a paid day off perfect  
3 attendance day.

4 MR. HOEPF: Yeah. Okay. Yeah.

5 MR. SCHLOTT: So, I mean, there's -- you know, they were  
6 rewarded for that.

7 MR. HOEPF: Yeah. So, I mean, you know -- what's your,  
8 what's your -- you know, how do you feel about -- and I'll let you  
9 both kind of comment, but I mean do you feel like it's a fair  
10 system from your perspective? I mean, do you have any --

11 MR. SCHLOTT: This is Mark --

12 MR. HOEPF: -- concerns about it?

13 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

14 MR. HOEPF: (Indiscernible) think you can work with it. I  
15 think you've already kind of said, it's -- you think it's pretty  
16 generous. Logan, what do, what do you think?

17 MR. SMITH: Well, yeah. From places I worked at before, it  
18 seems very generous in my, in my opinion.

19 MR. HOEPF: Okay.

20 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

21 MR. HOEPF: Okay. And what about -- I mean, do you get a lot  
22 of complaints from employees about --

23 MR. SCHLOTT: This is Mark. Honestly, I haven't heard  
24 anything. I mean, folks especially coming out of COVID, right  
25 now, I mean, yeah, you know, they don't want to work. I mean --

1 and I'm -- let me take that back. You know, if they could have  
2 more time off, obviously people would want more time off. I mean,  
3 everybody wants more time off, right? But there has to be -- to  
4 secure the benefits and service our customers, you know, there has  
5 to be a balance.

6 MR. HOEPF: Yeah.

7 MR. SCHLOTT: And again, our company always rewarded, you  
8 know, longevity and seniority and, you know, the commitment to the  
9 company. And, you know, we've always treated long-term employees,  
10 you know, so that the longer you're working with us as a part of  
11 our team, the more you'll be rewarded.

12 MR. HOEPF: Got you.

13 MR. SCHLOTT: And I think, you know, we like to keep  
14 incentivizing that.

15 MR. HOEPF: Right.

16 MR. SCHLOTT: You know. I went -- just to be clear, the  
17 policies that are in that factory are the same for me. I have the  
18 same health insurance as they have. I have the same everything as  
19 they have, because that's important to me. I'm no better than  
20 anybody in that factory. In the end, we all have the same thing,  
21 and we all -- are all teammates, and we do the same thing.

22 MR. HOEPF: So, the point system applies to you.

23 MR. SCHLOTT: The point system applies to Logan.

24 MR. HOEPF: Right, the point system applies to you and Logan.

25 Okay.

1 MR. SCHLOTT: And me. No, and me, I'm joking. But yeah,  
2 it's -- we have the exact same policies for every employee in the  
3 company. The exact same benefits.

4 MR. HOEPF: You get the same leave?

5 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

6 MR. HOEPF: Okay, so the same leave.

7 MR. SCHLOTT: Absolutely.

8 MR. HOEPF: Of course, you probably got quite a bit of leave  
9 with -- you're a very senior person in the company, but you've  
10 earned it, right?

11 MR. SCHLOTT: Right, exactly. And I didn't take -- I don't  
12 take my vacation, I'm always here, but -- especially now.

13 MR. HOEPF: So, how about you Logan, have you -- you know, I  
14 don't know if you're any more on the front lines than Mark is, but  
15 do you -- do people complain about these attendance policies or  
16 report some issues at all?

17 MR. SMITH: The ones that, the ones that want to take  
18 advantage of it complain. I'm going to be honest with you. you  
19 know, they -- what -- I don't think someone would realize the  
20 benefits they have compared to other places. We're fair, we're  
21 competitive. For myself, you know, I was never a person -- I'm  
22 always here. Yeah, I don't get sick. But I listen, you know,  
23 because everybody -- every person is different, and the majority  
24 think it's fair.

25 MR. HOEPF: Okay.

1 MR. SCHLOTT: And I just want to bring up one more thing.  
2 Again, this is Mark. We do have a personal leave policy, so if  
3 there's an extenuating circumstance that they are working with HR  
4 on, HR will grant them, you know, leave. We do have a leave, a  
5 leave policy, but we don't have a leave policy for every -- I want  
6 off every Friday and Monday.

7 MR. HOEPF: No, I understand, you know. And again, that's  
8 why I wanted to ask about it was just because, you know, I mean, I  
9 think, you know -- well, I don't want to speculate too much, but I  
10 understand you need -- you know, you have to have a policy.

11 MR. SCHLOTT: It's a balance.

12 MR. HOEPF: You have to have --

13 (Crosstalk)

14 MR. HOEPF: -- some kind of system.

15 MR. SCHLOTT: And we're --

16 MR. HOEPF: And that's to be fair, right, to everybody.

17 Nobody's getting favored by the -- you know --

18 MR. SCHLOTT: You know, we're not a law firm, or a doctor, or  
19 whatever where, you know, you can kind of work off site. We have  
20 an assembly line process. So, if the people aren't here, it  
21 affects everyone because we can't run our equipment. And then it  
22 affects our customers, and it affects -- you know, so you have to,  
23 you have to be here to operate the equipment.

24 MR. HOEPF: Right.

25 MR. SCHLOTT: For the process.

1 MR. HOEPF: I understand. I think we should take a little  
2 bit of a break. You guys okay with taking a short break?

3 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Yes.

4 MS. GUNARATNAM: Please.

5 MR. MAURER: Oh, yeah.

6 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Okay. We're going to take a short break  
7 here.

8 (Off the record.)

9 (On the record.)

10 MR. HOEPF: Back on the record here. And I just had a couple  
11 -- just quick -- a couple quick clarification questions, then I'm  
12 going to turn it over to Rachel. We were talking about the point  
13 system. Half points?

14 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah.

15 MR. HOEPF: Is that a thing or --

16 MR. SCHLOTT: That's a thing. So, a half a day.

17 MR. WRIGHT: Half a day, half a point.

18 MR. SCHLOTT: So, I've had to leave at 11:00 a.m. to pick my  
19 daughter or son up from school, and they'd only get a half a  
20 point, not a full point.

21 MR. HOEPF: Okay.

22 MR. SCHLOTT: Yep.

23 MR. HOEPF: Got you. Got you. This is probably so trivial,  
24 but could you choose to take a half a point rather than burn one  
25 of your free days?

1 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, absolutely. They have the choice to do  
2 that.

3 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Okay, great. And then, last question.  
4 Can people get a point some other way? Is it strictly attendance  
5 or could it be, you know, a point for -- I don't know, somebody  
6 makes a rude remark to somebody.

7 MR. SCHLOTT: The point system is solely for attendance.

8 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Okay.

9 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

10 MR. SCHLOTT: We have a progressive --

11 MR. SMITH: You can come in late to work -- if you come in --  
12 Logan here. If you come in late then you get, you get point for  
13 that, or no?

14 MR. SCHLOTT: Well, there's a grace period. Yeah, there's a  
15 grace period. You know, so, if you're 30 seconds late, you're not  
16 going to get to have a point.

17 MR. HOEPF: Right.

18 MR. SCHLOTT: And if you call ahead, you know, it will be a  
19 10- or 15-minute grace period, but if you come in at -- you're  
20 scheduled to start at 7:00 in the morning, you show up at noon,  
21 yeah, you're going to get a point.

22 MR. HOEPF: Yeah, you show up an hour late, you'll get a half  
23 a point or --

24 MR. SCHLOTT: Exactly.

25 MR. HOEPF: Okay. All right. I got you. I got you. So,

1 it's a separate -- and it's a separate system if somebody is doing  
2 something that's inappropriate --

3 MR. SCHLOTT: So, we have a progressive -- this is Mark. We  
4 have a progressive discipline system. So, in that -- and again,  
5 that would be the frontline managers. The plant manager usually  
6 would authorize it and then work with HR.

7 So, just a performance issue, you were supposed to put 20  
8 bags in the case, and you only put 10, so the supervisor might  
9 warn him first, a couple of verbal warnings. And if it continues  
10 to happen, they might give them an oral counseling first, and if  
11 it continued to happen, you would get a written counseling.

12 And if it would continue to happen, then they would get  
13 disciplined, maybe a day off or three days off. And if it  
14 continues to happen, it could lead to the termination, but it's a  
15 progressive disciplinary process.

16 MR. HOEPF: Got you. Got you. Okay.

17 MR. MAURER: Separate system.

18 MR. SCHLOTT: Yep, totally separate system.

19 MR. HOEPF: Great. All right, Rachel, I will hand it off to  
20 you.

21 MS. GUNARATNAM: All right. Thanks. Just a few follow ups  
22 from Mike, and then I'll go to some other different topics. What  
23 is -- Mark, what's your background, like, before this? Before --

24 MR. SCHLOTT: So, I started with the company in 1986. I was  
25 in the maintenance department and working on engineers --

1 electrical engineering. So, then I got involved in production  
2 management, I was going to school back then. And then actually  
3 Line 8 -- we installed Line 8 over in West riding and it didn't  
4 work. I was a young guy, and my predecessor came over to Mrs.  
5 Mark. We want you to go over there and see if you can get it  
6 running, so I was fortunate enough to be able to do that. So,  
7 that led into me becoming director of Continuous Improvement for  
8 the company. And then, you know, I progressed into the position  
9 I'm in now.

10 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. And how many years have you been CEO?

11 MR. SCHLOTT: So, officially, 9 days after the -- 9 days  
12 before the incident, officially I was COO here for 14 years. Rich  
13 Palmer, he was -- he wasn't involved in the day-to-day operations.  
14 So, effectively, I was COO running the company.

15 MS. GUNARATNAM: All right. Thanks. Logan?

16 MR. SMITH: I started here as the quality coordinator and  
17 then advanced to the quality manager and director of technical  
18 services, and then I got in operations.

19 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. All right, thanks. And when you were  
20 talking about training of maintenance staff, you mentioned mostly  
21 on-the-job training specific to whatever the role was. Do any of  
22 them actually maintain any certifications or anything like that?  
23 Is that on the record?

24 MR. SCHLOTT: Through the years there has, there has been  
25 some of that. I can't speak to what anyone has, now. Again, with



1 our business and our industry, the equipment is so unique. A lot  
2 of it's European and it's not like a drill press or a lathe, you  
3 know, that might be operated in many different businesses. It's  
4 sort of unique to our business. So, that's why we do a lot of in-  
5 house training.

6 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay, all right.

7 MR. SCHLOTT: Because, you know, we have a Rousch (ph.)  
8 foiler, right? You won't see that --

9 MS. GUNARATNAM: Right, there's no certification for a foiler  
10 (ph.). Yes. So, and your offices were in Building 1?

11 MR. SMITH: Yes.

12 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Did you guys ever think about  
13 reaching out to your -- when you're -- Mike was talking about  
14 public awareness, I'm just curious, like, did you ever feel like  
15 you could reach out to UGI or anything like that?

16 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, this is Mark. Great question, you know,  
17 pre-incident, no. To be honest, post-incident yes. You know, I  
18 think we, you know, talked -- we spoke about it today. I think we  
19 all have to do a better job of communicating.

20 MS. GUNARATNAM: Right. And you mentioned the billers, they  
21 went to finance, or they probably threw away some of that safety  
22 information. Have you now -- is anything kind of corrected there  
23 with regard to, like, going to the finance department? If you  
24 receive what looks like safety information --

25 MR. SCHLOTT: Comes to me now.

1 MS. GUNARATNAM: All -- everything comes to you now?

2 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

3 MS. GUNARATNAM: And then goes to the finance or you --

4 MR. SCHLOTT: Well, no. The finance gets -- and anything  
5 inside now --

6 MS. GUNARATNAM: They're sending --

7 MR. SCHLOTT: -- they're receiving it now, so their monthly  
8 letters and stuff, yeah, I've been receiving them.

9 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. All right. So, with regard to -- you  
10 mentioned on the safety committee stuff, you were talking about  
11 you deal with food safety and employee safety, right? What are  
12 the kind of employee safety issues that would come up  
13 historically, typically?

14 MR. SMITH: Again, stuff like cords, like cords on the  
15 ground, tripping hazards --

16 MS. GUNARATNAM: Trip hazards, okay.

17 MR. SMITH: -- (indiscernible), slip hazards, guards, you  
18 know, you know, a machine, you know, might not be performing  
19 correctly, and stuff like that.

20 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah.

21 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

22 MS. GUNARATNAM: Did you ever have any employee injuries?

23 MR. SMITH: Yeah. There were some employee injuries that  
24 would happen, they would, they would get documented.

25 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. And would they be dealing with slip,

1 trip, falls kind of --

2 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

3 MR. SCHLOTT: Typically --

4 MR. SMITH: Typically, that, or let's say maybe --

5 MR. SCHLOTT: Again, this is Mark. Most of them are sprains  
6 and strains, like 90, 95 percent --

7 (Crosstalk)

8 MS. GUNARATNAM: Related to physical, yeah.

9 MR. SMITH: Then we look for corrective actions.

10 MS. GUNARATNAM: Right. Okay. And you mentioned, did OSHA  
11 -- did they come on scene to inspect throughout the years?

12 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

13 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

14 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. What -- how often, do you know?

15 MR. SMITH: It's been more within the last couple of years, I  
16 think. Maybe once or twice, you know, throughout that year,  
17 maybe.

18 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.

19 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

20 MS. GUNARATNAM: Any citations, anything like that? Or  
21 warnings.

22 MR. SMITH: Yes.

23 MR. SCHLOTT: And I can't speak to that right now.

24 MR. SMITH: Yeah, I forget what it was for. I would have to  
25 look at the documentation. I have it somewhere.

1 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. I can follow up on that with you --

2 MR. SMITH: Yeah, I had some.

3 MS. GUNARATNAM: Sure.

4 MR. SCHLOTT: We did receive one recently. It was for the  
5 300 log. It was some money was put in the wrong category, or  
6 something like that.

7 MS. GUNARATNAM: Sure. Yeah. And the fire department, did  
8 they ever come inspect ever.

9 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes. This is Mark. Yes, from time to time,  
10 the fire marshal would come through. Again, Amy was responsible  
11 for that. So, I can't speak to the timing or how -- the  
12 frequency, but that would happen from time to time. Not often,  
13 but they would come through.

14 MS. GUNARATNAM: Do you know what they were checking?

15 MR. SCHLOTT: Typically, the sprinkler systems. Like, the  
16 insurance company would do an annual check on the sprinkler  
17 system. We do annual -- like, we have a pump over here and stuff  
18 like that. So, they do annual inspections and testing of the  
19 sprinkler systems and stuff.

20 MS. GUNARATNAM: So, the -- okay, so they do annual  
21 inspection. Did they looked at -- did you have -- so, speaking on  
22 to your -- I actually want to talk about that, your fire  
23 suppression and detection in Buildings 1 and 2. What did you have  
24 in there?

25 MR. SCHLOTT: So, each floor was fully sprinklered. You

1 know, ceiling level, there was, there was no pump needed. I guess  
2 the pressure was sufficient. We never had to put an auxiliary  
3 pump on there, but -- and then smoke alarms on each floor.

4 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.

5 MR. SCHLOTT: 24-hour monitor through Protect Alarms. So, we  
6 -- it's monitored.

7 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. And you had that also in Building 1  
8 and 2, and all your other buildings --

9 MR. SCHLOTT: All the -- all facilities. That's correct.

10 MS. GUNARATNAM: Have you had -- has it gone off? Have any  
11 of the alarms ever -- prior to March 24th.

12 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes, it would -- they would go off from time to  
13 time, sometimes the smoke detectors actually would get dusty.  
14 They'll be false alarms. Sometimes it would be the telephone line  
15 dropped down and sometimes, you know, the -- an electrical motor  
16 might -- if a pump or something like that overheat, then they  
17 would want to evacuate the floor.

18 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. So, I was going to ask, what's your  
19 procedure when they go off?

20 MR. SCHLOTT: So, we have an evacuation policy as part of our  
21 safety. We practice fire drills annually. Not only do we  
22 practice them, but we also time them. So, if they're not  
23 evacuating the building properly, we re-do them, sort of fail, and  
24 they're making it two.

25 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

1 MR. SCHLOTT: We have different muster points outside where  
2 the people are supposed to report to. And like the West Reading  
3 facility, the office staff and the Building 2 staff are supposed  
4 to go right across the street there. The other employees are  
5 supposed to evacuate to the back parking lot. So, there's  
6 attendants, the people know who's in the building, who's not in  
7 the building, and they have walkie talkie so that they  
8 communicate. So, I know that the day of the event, they had an  
9 accurate count within minutes of who was accounted for and who was  
10 not.

11 MS. GUNARATNAM: The attendance logs, who would be holding on  
12 to those?

13 MR. SCHLOTT: So, in the office there was a book. So, if you  
14 walked in and out, you had to sign you were in and out. For the  
15 manufacturing process, the supervisors have a lineup that they  
16 keep in their pocket. So, when we evacuated the building, the  
17 supervisor had that line up right away, and she was part of the  
18 control center, if you will.

19 MS. GUNARATNAM: That lineup is for the manufacturing side?

20 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes, of who was there, where they were at. One  
21 other thing just to bring up from a safety standpoint, we do  
22 rotate positions every hour and we do that for repetitive motion  
23 and lifting. So, we don't have somebody standing there doing the  
24 same thing all day long. So, every hour they go to a different  
25 spot. So, they're, you know, they're --

1 MS. GUNARATNAM: And that's being tracked?

2 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes, yep. The supervisors know exactly where  
3 they're going, and they create these mini lineups where they know  
4 how everybody follows each other.

5 MS. GUNARATNAM: Ergonomically, good.

6 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes, that's another one of the safety things  
7 that we do here, the company.

8 MS. GUNARATNAM: So, the -- maybe when we do the tour, you  
9 can show us where those evacuation spots are?

10 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, for sure.

11 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah. Just didn't -- couldn't place them  
12 when people talked about it. So, the evacuation policy that you  
13 mentioned, is that within some kind of other broader -- is it part  
14 of a safety policy or program?

15 MR. SMITH: Yeah, it's part of our -- what we call our Red  
16 Book.

17 MS. GUNARATNAM: It's -- yeah. That you submitted.

18 MR. SMITH: Yep.

19 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah. It's our emergency response. Protocols,  
20 if you will.

21 MS. GUNARATNAM: And when was that book developed?

22 MR. SMITH: That's before my time.

23 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, early 2000s, mid 2000s.

24 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay, sure.

25 MR. SCHLOTT: We updated it to the current version.

1 MR. SMITH: Yeah. We update yearly.

2 MR. SCHLOTT: And then an annual review of it.

3 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

4 MS. GUNARATNAM: You do an annual review of it?

5 MR. SMITH: Yeah, it's part SQF also.

6 MR. SCHLOTT: And we also -- you know, one of the things we  
7 worked on the past six or nine months leading up to the incident  
8 was, you know, we were watching the news and we saw there's a lot  
9 of active shooter sort of things going on in the community. So,  
10 we went to some seminars.

11 Amy was responsible for that with Kelly, (ph.) our QA folk.  
12 So, we actually just instituted an active shooter policy on if --  
13 the unlikelihood that would ever happen, on how our folks and the  
14 whole teams could react to it and what everybody should do. So,  
15 we were actively just starting to train that when this happened,  
16 but again, when we recognize there's a need for something, it gets  
17 ratcheted up to a senior management level.

18 We decided that that's something we wanted to do, and we were  
19 -- you know, it took us a while to develop the policies, but we  
20 put panic alarms in different spots of the buildings and then  
21 instructed the employees on what you should do. Barricade, fight,  
22 you know, all that stuff.

23 MS. GUNARATNAM: So, the annual -- who does the annual review  
24 of the Red Book?

25 MR. SMITH: That's typically Kelly Sherman (ph.), which is



1 our quality manager. And then it is reviewed within the senior  
2 management.

3 MS. GUNARATNAM: Within the --

4 MR. SMITH: Within the senior --

5 MR. SCHLOTT: Senior management.

6 MS. GUNARATNAM: Senior management, I got it.

7 MR. SCHLOTT: Yup, it's at that level that --

8 MS. GUNARATNAM: So, the quality manager, does she attend all  
9 the safety committee meetings?

10 MR. SMITH: No, she doesn't, no.

11 MR. SCHLOTT: Well, just to clarify if I may, this is Mark  
12 again. So, part of our Red manual is also food safety. So, I --  
13 like, so what would happen if we have any kind of food issue or  
14 recall, or a vendor calls and said they have issues. So, that's  
15 part of our emergency response as well.

16 So, the Book is kind of shared between food safety and people  
17 safety. So, Amy would be responsible -- would have been  
18 responsible for the HR safety part of that. Kelly always took the  
19 lead because she would always update the food safety part of it.

20 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Got it. So, it's actually split  
21 between two people.

22 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, you'll see multiple because again, it's  
23 the same kind of --

24 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. So, she --

25 MR. SCHLOTT: procedures.

1 MS. GUNARATNAM: So, while Kelly may have taken the lead, did  
2 she work with Sue?

3 MR. SCHLOTT: Amy.

4 MS. GUNARATNAM: Amy, sorry.

5 MR. SMITH: And yes, she would --

6 MR. SCHLOTT: Amy, 100 percent, yes. I'm aware of that.

7 MS. GUNARATNAM: Oh, okay. To update --

8 MR. SMITH: Yeah, yeah.

9 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, they would -- they worked together on  
10 that.

11 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay, so but now this is being handled by  
12 your new safety manager?

13 MR. SMITH: That's correct. Along with Kelly.

14 MS. GUNARATNAM: Along with Kelly.

15 MR. SMITH: Again, the food safety (indiscernible).

16 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. How is the safety manager -- their  
17 responsibilities -- are they strictly employee safety?

18 MR. SMITH: Yes.

19 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.

20 MR. SCHLOTT: And training.

21 MR. SMITH: Yes. Training, also.

22 MR. SCHLOTT: Right, employee safety and training.

23 MS. GUNARATNAM: Do you -- are they part of the production  
24 process at all?

25 MR. SMITH: Yes.

1 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. So, they're doing two roles?

2 MR. SMITH: Well, you say part of the production --

3 MS. GUNARATNAM: Like, are they a line technician?

4 MR. SMITH: No, no, no. Their role is safety and training  
5 manager.

6 MS. GUNARATNAM: That's it?

7 MR. SCHLOTT: That's it. Yeah, that's their sole  
8 responsibility for the entire company.

9 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. And they're full time?

10 MR. SMITH: Yes.

11 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Did you ever have this position  
12 before?

13 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

14 MS. GUNARATNAM: Could you explain?

15 MR. SCHLOTT: Safety Manager, we had from 2001 to 2012. And  
16 that's when we really kind of redid all of our systems and  
17 enhanced everything. He left for -- you know, had a big  
18 opportunity to travel so, he left. And then our HR Director at  
19 the time had a safety background so then he absorbed a lot of  
20 those responsibilities. And really at that point, it was just  
21 about maintaining the programs and policies that we had.

22 MS. GUNARATNAM: Got it. And was it the same role as his  
23 current one where they did full time employee --

24 MR. SCHLOTT: He had always full time.

25 MS. GUNARATNAM: -- safety training?

1 MR. SCHLOTT: Absolutely.

2 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.

3 MR. SCHLOTT: Yep.

4 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay, so then that role got absorbed by HR.  
5 And then food safety still was under the quality manager.

6 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes. So, safe -- that safety manager reported  
7 to the director of HR, even back then. So, it was always an HR  
8 function.

9 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.

10 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah.

11 MS. GUNARATNAM: And that safety manager now is reporting to  
12 HR?

13 MR. SMITH: No, he's reporting to me.

14 MR. SCHLOTT: He is actually reporting right now to Logan  
15 directly.

16 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. All right. I was -- yeah. And you  
17 mentioned natural gas detectors that you had done over here at  
18 Wyomissing, which is great to hear because I'm a huge proponent.  
19 When -- like, how did you come -- I'm just curious how you came  
20 across that technology.

21 MR. SCHLOTT: I can't speak to it. I was aware that they  
22 were doing it, but it was our engineering group and our  
23 maintenance group, and I'm sure it was some of the contractors  
24 that we were using at the time. So, I believe Protect Alarms.  
25 Again, we're monitoring that 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through

1 our security fire protection systems.

2 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. You said Protect Alarms, right? The  
3 company?

4 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, that's the company.

5 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. So, how does it work where they  
6 detect gas? Does it go to the -- does it go to UGI or go to fire  
7 department?

8 MR. SCHLOTT: It would go immediately to their operator,  
9 which --

10 MS. GUNARATNAM: Dispatch.

11 MR. SCHLOTT: -- the alarms would go off. We would  
12 immediately evacuate the building and then they would -- 9-1 --  
13 it'd be -- go -- be a 911 call where they would be notified  
14 immediately.

15 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay, and then you would -- yeah, they'd  
16 activated the evacuation.

17 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, post incident, we had some gas heaters  
18 out here. So, we now have detectors out here.

19 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Yeah. Is there any -- does it  
20 communicate to UGI at all, or --

21 MR. SCHLOTT: I don't think so. I think it goes through  
22 their switchboard, which goes right into 911, which I'm sure --

23 MS. GUNARATNAM: The fire department comes out.

24 MR. SCHLOTT: -- the fire department --

25 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

1 MR. SCHLOTT: -- would be notified and then --

2 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah.

3 MR. SCHLOTT: -- probably through that process.

4 MS. GUNARATNAM: Oh, okay. All right. But so, your  
5 engineers were the one that thought of --

6 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

7 MS. GUNARATNAM: Putting those (indiscernible)?

8 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah.

9 MS. GUNARATNAM: Did -- when they thought of it, did they  
10 talk to you about it or --

11 MR. SCHLOTT: We have engineering meetings. I know we talked  
12 about it. I can't recall exactly how the process went. I mean,  
13 hundreds of projects. But --

14 MS. GUNARATNAM: Do you remember when those -- oh, you said  
15 they were installed earlier this year or --

16 MR. SCHLOTT: No, they -- again, I'm speculating a little  
17 bit. I said they're ten years.

18 MS. GUNARATNAM: Oh, ten years?

19 MR. SCHLOTT: Five, ten years. I'm speculating, but it is  
20 something like that.

21 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah. Sure.

22 MR. SCHLOTT: It hasn't been recently.

23 MS. GUNARATNAM: So, if I followed up like specifics on that,  
24 could I --

25 MR. SCHLOTT: We can, we can try to find out, we can work

1 with Bob and his group and see if we can get some documentation or  
2 protect (indiscernible) and see if we can figure that out. I'm  
3 not sure if we can, but we'll try.

4 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. And then since the accident, you've  
5 installed more everywhere or --

6 MR. SCHLOTT: Yup. Anywhere that we felt that was anywhere  
7 near a confined space, and where we did have confined spaces, if  
8 we could remove the gas appliances and install another solution,  
9 we did. So, in the basement over here in our chocolate tanks, we  
10 removed all the gas appliances.

11 MS. GUNARATNAM: Right, and put steam.

12 MR. SCHLOTT: Put steam. Steam heaters.

13 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay, Thanks. You mentioned your fire  
14 drills you do once a year.

15 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

16 MS. GUNARATNAM: Do you have documentation on those?

17 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

18 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. I think I requested those. They have  
19 a timing on them?

20 MR. SCHLOTT: Yep.

21 MS. GUNARATNAM: What's the expected timing for getting out  
22 of the building?

23 MR. SMITH: Five. Five minutes.

24 MR. SCHLOTT: Five to six minutes, I think.

25 MR. SMITH: Yeah. Five minutes, yeah.

1 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.

2 MR. SMITH: Yeah, I can -- I'll verify that.

3 MR. SCHLOTT: And that's from evacuating to confirming.

4 MR. SMITH: Confirm. Right, accountability, yes.

5 MR. SCHLOTT: And then they call back and say, everybody's  
6 confirmed.

7 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

8 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Yeah.

9 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, we just had one here to give you an  
10 example. So, we had one person stay back that nobody was aware  
11 of, and we had them hide in the warehouse. That's how we test and  
12 see if it works.

13 MS. GUNARATNAM: And it worked?

14 MR. SCHLOTT: It worked.

15 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Good.

16 MR. SCHLOTT: That's how we do some testing. So, it's not  
17 just go out. Everybody checks it off, we literally just ask  
18 somebody, say go hide in the warehouse for a little bit. Don't  
19 leave when the alarm goes off.

20 MS. GUNARATNAM: Did your -- prior to the accident, did you  
21 have -- your -- you had an evacuation. Did you have a -- policy  
22 obviously. Did you have an emergency response plan with --

23 MR. SCHLOTT: Mm-hmm.

24 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.

25 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah.



1 MS. GUNARATNAM: Is that the -- that's the Red Books?

2 MR. SCHLOTT: The Red Books.

3 MS. GUNARATNAM: It is the Red Book? Okay.

4 MR. SCHLOTT: If you read through there, it'll have  
5 different, you know, bomb threats, fatalities, it'll be the  
6 policies.

7 MS. GUNARATNAM: Fires.

8 MR. SCHLOTT: Fires.

9 MR. SMITH: Maintenance interruption.

10 MR. SCHLOTT: Power outages, because, you know, we're  
11 sensitive to power outages, especially in our distribution center,  
12 because we got, you know, tens of thousands of pallets of  
13 chocolate. So, in the summertime, that's a big deal for us if we  
14 lose power.

15 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah.

16 MR. SCHLOTT: For the refrigeration.

17 MS. GUNARATNAM: Right.

18 MR. SCHLOTT: So, there's a lot of different things like  
19 that.

20 MS. GUNARATNAM: And that is -- you said that was split  
21 between Kelly and -- okay.

22 MR. SCHLOTT: Mm-hmm.

23 MS. GUNARATNAM: Did it apply to gas emergencies? Was that  
24 ever a factor?

25 MR. SCHLOTT: We didn't --

1 MR. SMITH: No.

2 MR. SCHLOTT: -- we didn't have that initially spelled out.  
3 No.

4 MS. GUNARATNAM: All right. Just checking. There was no  
5 discussion -- was there ever any discussions in their safety  
6 committee meetings about fires or smelling gas or anything like  
7 that? Was that ever on anyone's radar?

8 MR. SMITH: I do not recall anything.

9 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. And are those safety committee  
10 meetings ever documented, the minutes? Are they stored somewhere?

11 MR. SMITH: Yes. Yes.

12 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. So, if you had an evacuation, who was  
13 allowed to, like, issue the evacuation? You had to issue like an  
14 emergency.

15 MR. SCHLOTT: Anybody. There's fire pull systems around the  
16 plant. We had one I remember a year ago where a newer employee,  
17 it was a heat tape issue or something like that and he pulled the  
18 fire alarm and evacuated the building. Again, everybody --  
19 anybody has authority to do that.

20 MS. GUNARATNAM: To do that. So, they can self-evacuate.

21 MR. SMITH: Oh, yeah.

22 MR. SCHLOTT: They can self-evacuate. Yup.

23 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Did they -- was that communicated to  
24 employees, like during fire drills or safety committee meetings?

25 MR. SMITH: I'm not sure if it actually was. I'm not sure if

1 it actually was.

2 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.

3 MR. SMITH: That's a good point though.

4 MS. GUNARATNAM: Because you mentioned the safety meeting  
5 minutes are posted on every floor for them. Was there ever, like,  
6 a meeting to discuss if something was like, hey, guys, someone got  
7 hurt. We need to talk about this. Like, do you have actual  
8 meetings for all employees --

9 MR. SCHLOTT: They would do it at the staff meeting. And  
10 again, I've --

11 MS. GUNARATNAM: Oh, okay. Logan's doing that now. But, you  
12 know, previously and for many years -- I know it's happening now.

13 MR. SMITH: Yeah. Yeah. At different -- yeah. Yeah.  
14 Because what we have our staff meetings and HR is represented  
15 also, and they take the minutes. And what they do is they review  
16 anything that would have happened, you know, within that month.

17 MS. GUNARATNAM: Right. Okay. That's a --

18 MR. SMITH: That's where (indiscernible).

19 MS. GUNARATNAM: -- that's a monthly meeting you're talking  
20 about with the --

21 MR. SMITH: Correct.

22 MS. GUNARATNAM: -- entire staff.

23 MR. SMITH: Correct.

24 MR. SCHLOTT: With all the supervisors, all the maintenance  
25 staff.

1 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Yeah.

2 MR. SCHLOTT: The QA staff, the HR staff.

3 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay, so --

4 MR. SMITH: Maintenance.

5 MR. SCHLOTT: Right, right.

6 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah. Okay. So, you're going to follow up  
7 on the -- whether they were ever communicated or -- there were no  
8 written procedures for self-evacuate? Like, nothing --

9 MR. SCHLOTT: There's an evacuation policy.

10 MS. GUNARATNAM: Policy. Right.

11 MR. SCHLOTT: There is. There is.

12 MS. GUNARATNAM: Right. But that doesn't address, you can  
13 self-evacuate or --

14 MR. SCHLOTT: I don't recall.

15 MR. SMITH: I don't know. We'd have to look at it.

16 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, I don't recall.

17 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. But it would be in the Red Book,  
18 right?

19 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

20 MR. SMITH: Yes.

21 MS. GUNARATNAM: I just want to switch gears a little bit.

22 Did you have any previous incidents -- I want to talk about  
23 previous gas incidents specifically, leading up to the accident?

24 Did you -- were you aware of any gas incidents prior to?

25 MR. SCHLOTT: So, this is Mark. The only incident I'm aware

1 of was, I think back in 2020. There was a, there was alleged  
2 smell back at the boiler house. And I think our maintenance staff  
3 and our plant manager were trying to contact UGI. They weren't  
4 having success doing that. And at the time, I was -- I'm on a lot  
5 of local boards here, so I was on the local chamber board with one  
6 of their representatives, Pam Finik (ph.) I think it is. Very  
7 nice person. I got along with her well.

8 So, my plant manager came to me and says, Mark, we're trying  
9 to reach out to UGI, and they won't -- they're not here. So, I  
10 call Pam and Pam immediately called somebody and they responded.

11 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay, do you know what number she called for  
12 UGI? Is it a dispatch, or emergency response number?

13 MR. SCHLOTT: I got an email from an individual from UGI,  
14 very nice, that -- but I don't, I don't remember, because I just  
15 called Pam and said, Pam, can you help me?

16 MS. GUNARATNAM: Right. And they sent someone?

17 MR. SCHLOTT: And she got on it immediately for me.

18 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Thanks. And did you find out what  
19 happened? Like why there was a --

20 MR. SCHLOTT: They -- you know, they responded, and they took  
21 care of the issue.

22 MS. GUNARATNAM: Oh, okay.

23 MR. SCHLOTT: They don't normally communicate with us what's  
24 found. Again, it could be a, you know, if they would show up  
25 today and repair something, they don't tell us what they repair.

1 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. All right. But it was on their line?

2 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

3 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah. Not yours.

4 MR. SCHLOTT: Mm-hmm.

5 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Any -- but that's the last one you  
6 remember in 2020?

7 MR. SCHLOTT: That's the only one that I remember that I've  
8 been involved in. Yes.

9 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. In that situation, are you aware of,  
10 like, who reported what in that?

11 MR. SCHLOTT: I'd be speculating. Again, I knew the  
12 maintenance supervisor, which was Steve Sassaman at the time. I  
13 knew Sue was involved. As far as what happened before that, I'm  
14 not 100 percent sure.

15 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Yeah. All right. Let me think. Did  
16 you have any fires leading up -- the year leading up to the -- no?

17 MR. SCHLOTT: No.

18 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.

19 MR. SMITH: No.

20 MS. GUNARATNAM: All right. Okay. And then just I want to  
21 go over this last section before I turn it over to the other party  
22 members. On the day of the accident, we actually -- I know you  
23 talked a little bit with Sarah (ph.) about this.

24 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

25 MS. GUNARATNAM: Sorry if it's redundant. You were there --

1 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

2 MS. GUNARATNAM: -- in Building 1 in your office?

3 MR. SCHLOTT: Correct.

4 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah. And can you walk us through a little  
5 bit about what time you started that day?

6 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes. We had a really busy week that week  
7 because we had our investors in town. So, I probably got in the  
8 office 8:00, 8:30. I was there all day. Meetings with -- had a  
9 meeting together in the morning and, you know, different meetings.  
10 And again, it's a public street, people in and out all day long.

11 Went to lunch, came back. I parked back there. I walked by  
12 there numerous times up and down the stairwell. So, it was around  
13 -- and again, I mean, you start to lose track of time the further  
14 this goes along, but say, 4:30, 20 of 5:00 I went back to have a  
15 meeting with my sales team. So, I was all the way in the back of  
16 the facility over near Franklin Street.

17 And Deena (ph.) came over to me and said, Mark, there's a  
18 report of an unusual odor outside -- or odor outside -- I thought  
19 you would want to be aware of it. I said, okay. So, I finished  
20 my conversation with Dave (ph.) in 10 seconds or something like  
21 that. So, I thought, okay, it's 10 of 5:00 in the -- during the  
22 day, you know, on a Friday and, you know, it's the end of the day.  
23 I want to check in with Sue first before, you know, before I  
24 leave.

25 So, I walked through the office and when I got to where my

1 office is, which is where Deena was at, the front, right before  
2 the lobby area, there was just a smell of something. It wasn't,  
3 you know, I thought it was the maintenance shop because the  
4 maintenance shop is kind of on that side of the building. And  
5 sometimes if they're using a drill press or something like that,  
6 you get a little bit of an odor. It's a manufacturing facility.

7 So, I walked through, I got into the lobby and that smell was  
8 a little more pronounced. When I hit the door to walk down the  
9 steps to go outside --

10 MS. GUNARATNAM: It's Building 1?

11 MR. SCHLOTT: -- in Building 1 -- I was hit with a wall of  
12 natural gas. And I immediately I couldn't even finish my  
13 thoughts. I went, oh my God, that's natural -- and that's when  
14 the explosion happened. So, it knocked me, and I saw the -- kind  
15 of the wall come at me a little bit, which I thought was a  
16 hallucination. But after the wall actually moved. We were so  
17 lucky, so, so lucky that building didn't -- but anyways.

18 So, I immediately, you know, I kind of hit -- when I hit that  
19 wall of natural gas, I already had that -- this is in seconds, so  
20 it sounds a little silly, but I knew there was no natural gas in  
21 that part of the building. We had no appliances in that part of  
22 the building and there's no service lines. It's all the way in  
23 back of the facility. So, I knew there was a problem. Something  
24 was wrong.

25 And so, I got my bearings about me. And I remember looking



1 at the fire alarm. Right? I wanted to pull the fire alarm. But  
2 then the fire alarm went off. So, then I was the first one  
3 outside and I turned around and Building 2 was gone. So, I  
4 immediately went into, you know, what we consider our protocols.  
5 I think, Logan, you were the next one out behind me.

6 MR. SMITH: Right.

7 MR. SCHLOTT: But I called 911 and then I went through our  
8 protocols to start getting resources and it started check -- as we  
9 were doing that, as I was on the phone, there was, there was some  
10 people that were injured, a couple of them pretty badly. So, we  
11 started rendering first aid. Logan covered the one lady up with  
12 his shirt. Another gentleman was hurt pretty badly. So, when the  
13 office staff came out, we made sure that they were being attended  
14 to.

15 And then we heard somebody yelling. So, as we were on the  
16 phone, Logan got up on the pile, started digging through the pile.  
17 I got up on the pile and, you know, you look at this stuff, but  
18 you never realize there was so much glass in it as you're trying  
19 to use your bare hands. It's almost impossible. We were just  
20 cutting our hands up and there were some other ladies that came  
21 by, and they were trying to help us. But I looked down and there  
22 was a big electrical line going through that pile, so I got  
23 concerned. So, I started pulling them away. And then when I  
24 started pulling them away, that's when the firefighters started  
25 showing up and they pulled us away.

1           So, then after that, Deena was there and I was asking about  
2   accountability, and she was already through her book, and they had  
3   accountability. So, what they do is they normally go through it  
4   one time and then there's a second double check. But when the  
5   firefighters show up, it was, as you can imagine, chaotic as all  
6   get out. So, they started moving us back because there was still  
7   natural gas leaking.

8           And then before we know what we're up the hill, we're blocks  
9   away, we're disconnected from everybody. So, we walked four  
10  blocks around to get to the back lot of the other employees  
11  because the walkie talkies didn't even work at that point. So, we  
12  were trying to get on the cell phones to keep everybody there so  
13  we could do another count.

14          And then I spoke with all the employees. And then, when the  
15  first responders -- you know, I gave them keys. We gave them  
16  everything we could and just identified ourselves as, look, this  
17  is who we are, if you need anything, you know, we're here to help.  
18  But that's the story.

19          MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah. Yeah. I'm sorry you had to go  
20  through that, again.

21          MR. SCHLOTT: No, it's what it is.

22          MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah. So, just to get a few details, did  
23  you see a fire when you -- after these (indiscernible)?

24          MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah. So, very little. It was --

25          MS. GUNARATNAM: Oh, okay.

1 MR. SCHLOTT: -- inches. But because it took them a while to  
2 get some hose lines in there and stuff, it went from a little fire  
3 to 8, 12-foot flames by the time they got in there.

4 MS. GUNARATNAM: Where exactly did you see --

5 MR. SCHLOTT: In the center of the building.

6 MS. GUNARATNAM: Center of the building. Okay.

7 MR. SCHLOTT: It was just the center of the building.

8 MS. GUNARATNAM: Just to go back to your timeline, you said  
9 Deena came to you at 4:30?

10 MR. SCHLOTT: No, Deena came to me minutes before. She just  
11 walked back when I was having that meeting. She said, I just want  
12 you to know they reported an odor.

13 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.

14 MR. SCHLOTT: You know, again. And obviously, you know,  
15 afterwards I knew Mike went over, then he called and then Sue  
16 responded.

17 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah.

18 MR. SCHLOTT: And then Amy went out and, you know, it just  
19 looked like, you know, they were confused as to where it was  
20 coming from, I guess, and didn't realize what was going on in the  
21 basement at the time.

22 MS. GUNARATNAM: Did you see them around the gas meter?

23 MR. SCHLOTT: The only thing I saw on my way out before the  
24 explosion, I saw a white coat walking into Building 2.

25 Originally, I thought that was Sue. But what I come to find out

1 afterwards that it was Amy.

2 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. All right.

3 MR. SCHLOTT: If that's accurate or not, I don't know, but  
4 that's what was reported to me afterwards. But I knew they were  
5 in -- you know, they were at the building.

6 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. So, could you give us approximate  
7 time? I don't want to --

8 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, so ten off --

9 MS. GUNARATNAM: Ten --

10 MR. SCHLOTT: -- I mean, literally seconds before it  
11 exploded, because I -- you know, I was just walking through and  
12 there's a monitor for the front door there for security purposes.  
13 So, as I'm walking through, you just glance up and I saw the white  
14 coat in front of Building 2.

15 MS. GUNARATNAM: Oh, okay.

16 MR. SCHLOTT: Just second --

17 MS. GUNARATNAM: Like, around 4:50 --

18 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah.

19 MS. GUNARATNAM: -- she came -- was -- talked -- okay. All  
20 right.

21 MR. SCHLOTT: I mean it was 30 seconds, 45 seconds from when  
22 I was told until the explosion.

23 MS. GUNARATNAM: So, between 4:00 to 4:30 you were in the  
24 back part of Building 1?

25 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah. Meeting with my sales team.

1 MS. GUNARATNAM: Oh, okay. And before that did anyone, a  
2 maintenance, anyone come to you bringing anything to your  
3 attention ever.

4 MR. SCHLOTT: No. No.

5 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. And you smelled nothing --

6 MR. SCHLOTT: Nothing.

7 MS. GUNARATNAM: -- up until you were walking back on Cherry  
8 Street. You smelled some faint --

9 MR. SCHLOTT: No.

10 MS. GUNARATNAM: Oh.

11 MR. SCHLOTT: No. When I got into the hallway.

12 MS. GUNARATNAM: The hallway of Building 1. Okay.

13 MR. SCHLOTT: I was never outside. Like, any time I was  
14 outside that day, it was just a normal day.

15 MS. GUNARATNAM: Oh, okay. And that --

16 MR. SCHLOTT: And then we had a lot of employees leaving,  
17 too. So, a lot of the office staff was leaving that day. So,  
18 they were walking through the same hallway that I was. And  
19 nobody's reported anything.

20 MS. GUNARATNAM: Right. And so, that entrance is in the  
21 front of Building 1, that hallway?

22 MR. SCHLOTT: That is correct. Yeah. It comes right out  
23 onto 2nd Avenue.

24 MS. GUNARATNAM: The 2nd Ave -- that entrance. Okay.

25 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah.

1 MS. GUNARATNAM: That's where you smelled it.

2 MR. SCHLOTT: Yup.

3 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. And okay. And after the accident,  
4 did you smell anything, like could -- as you said you were -- did  
5 you smell gas after?

6 MR. SCHLOTT: I mean, honestly, I had a pretty good  
7 concussion and then your adrenaline's flowing. But I mean, we  
8 were smelling all kind of things at that point, right? I mean,  
9 there was a fire. It was debris everywhere. I mean, I don't  
10 recall. I just know the firefighters, when they go there, were  
11 concerned. And then they actually kept moving the public back  
12 further and further because it was an active -- I don't know if,  
13 how quickly they could get the gas turned off or whatnot.

14 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Logan, would you mind just walking us  
15 through a little bit of your day?

16 MR. SMITH: Yeah, started out like Mark was saying, around  
17 8:00-ish, had meetings throughout the day, had a meeting with  
18 Mark, went back for -- went to lunch. I typically don't live too  
19 far away. So, it's around 12:00-ish, 1:00 where -- somewhere  
20 around there, came back in.

21 During that time, I was in my office, which is on Cherry  
22 Street side on the third -- one, two, three -- second floor in the  
23 corner down towards the boiler house a little bit more. And this  
24 was around maybe, as Mark was saying, around quarter of, five of,  
25 because I was getting ready to pack up and I sat back down and

1 said, well, let me finish this up here. Because it was a Friday,  
2 I wanted to get out.

3 And then as I was finishing up, that's when I heard the  
4 explosion. At first, I thought, you know, maybe somebody would  
5 have dropped something on the floor -- because there's a  
6 production floor above me, but then when the ceiling tiles came  
7 down and the AC vents and all that stuff came down, it was more  
8 than that. That's when I knew something was going on.

9 So, I got up and I -- Kelly's office is just kind of like  
10 right next to me. And I, and I said, what was that? You know?  
11 And she said, I don't know. And then I -- and I just -- it didn't  
12 seem right. And then Tracy Coalman (ph.) was down at the far end  
13 towards the Franklin -- on the same floor at Franklin side. You  
14 know, she was -- and then that's when the fire, the fire alarm  
15 went off. And I said, we got to get out of here. Let's go, let's  
16 go, let's go, let's go. And some people were still like, you  
17 know --

18 MS. GUNARATNAM: In shock.

19 MR. SMITH: So, then we all got out, came down the steps.  
20 And then as Mark mentioned earlier, that's the last time I saw  
21 her.

22 MS. GUNARATNAM: And you didn't smell gas at any time?

23 MR. SMITH: No, I didn't smell anything.

24 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Any employees bring anything to your  
25 attention --

1 MR. SMITH: No.

2 MS. GUNARATNAM: -- prior to? Nothing?

3 MR. SMITH: No.

4 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. All right. So, did the fire alarm  
5 automatically go off or did someone pull it?

6 MR. SCHLOTT: I'm not sure. I -- honestly, I don't know. I  
7 don't know if they pulled it in production after the blast or  
8 because of the blast it went off.

9 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.

10 MR. SCHLOTT: I'm not sure. (Indiscernible).

11 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. So, just during that day, does -- was  
12 there anything off that day that employees brought to your  
13 attention? Nothing. Okay.

14 MR. SMITH: And then, like -- I even walked by there and I  
15 didn't smell anything because I parked in the back, also where  
16 Mark is at. And that was at 4:00. As Mark was saying, there's  
17 people leaving at 4:30, quarter of.

18 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah.

19 MR. SMITH: Nothing.

20 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. All right. I'll just turn it over to  
21 Gary.

22 MR. MAURER: Gary Maurer, no questions right now.

23 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Okay. Terri Cooper-Smith, do you guys  
24 know that -- are you aware that Palmer has a UGI large account  
25 representative, or were you ever told that you have a



1 representative?

2 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes, I think there is a direct representative  
3 like with -- we're definitely aware of Med-Ed (ph.) because we  
4 interact with them a lot. In fairness, we've -- I don't -- we  
5 rarely interact with UGI. We've never really had a reason to, but  
6 I was aware there was an account rep. I know they've changed  
7 through the years, but I was aware. I don't know who it is right  
8 now, to be honest.

9 MS. COOPER-SMITH: So, would -- so, you -- would you say that  
10 you haven't heard from a rep in a while? Or you haven't had any  
11 contact with them?

12 MR. SCHLOTT: We have not, we have not.

13 MS. COOPER-SMITH: So, just going back to the questions, just  
14 piggybacking off of Rachel's questions about the drills that you  
15 do. So, everybody is used to which fire drill, you know, the  
16 evacuation, what have you. Have you changed your drills since the  
17 incident?

18 MR. SCHLOTT: I don't think so.

19 MR. SMITH: No.

20 MR. SCHLOTT: I think the only thing we did is when we moved  
21 everybody over here, we -- because we had a lot of West Reading  
22 folks that were used to the -- to there, plus the office staff  
23 here. We redid all the drills and there's some new muster points  
24 now because, you know, we have the office staff here and that.  
25 So, we re-practiced a new location, but the actual procedures are

1 the same.

2 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Okay. And you said that you keep a lot of  
3 the safety -- the new safety items up on a bulletin board. I  
4 guess the bulletin boards are everywhere in the buildings and what  
5 have you, is there a way that Palmer is tracking the effectiveness  
6 of those messages on those boards? How do you know that your  
7 employees are actually --

8 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, that's -- we don't. We wouldn't --

9 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Are your employees -- okay, you have the  
10 one methane detector in, is it Building 3?

11 MR. SCHLOTT: Mm-hmm.

12 MS. COOPER-SMITH: That's in Building 3. And you put the  
13 methane detector in there because you deemed that to be a confined  
14 space.

15 MR. SCHLOTT: Because of the -- I believe from my memory is  
16 that they put it in there because of the amount of natural gas  
17 that was being used in a confined space, yes.

18 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Okay. And so, now you're considering and  
19 going forward with putting methane detectors --

20 MR. SCHLOTT: They're installed already.

21 MS. COOPER-SMITH: There are all installed already?

22 MR. SCHLOTT: Yep. We did a review two weeks after the  
23 incident.

24 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Okay.

25 MR. SCHLOTT: We removed gas appliances that we could, and we

1 put detectors in places that needed it.

2 MS. COOPER-SMITH: That needed it.

3 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

4 MS. COOPER-SMITH: So, if a methane detector goes off now, is  
5 there -- do employees know that --

6 MR. SCHLOTT: The fire alarm would automatically go off and  
7 the building would be automatically evacuated.

8 MS. COOPER-SMITH: So, the methane detectors are directly  
9 connected to the fire --

10 MR. SCHLOTT: 100 percent, 24-hour, 7 day a week monitoring.

11 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Okay.

12 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah.

13 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Would you be able to give a -- I don't  
14 know, Rachel, would they be able to give you the name or the  
15 information on that methane detector on the --

16 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah, I was going to request --

17 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Okay, great.

18 MR. SCHLOTT: Logan can get you that stuff for sure.

19 MS. GUNARATNAM: -- the model and --

20 MR. SCHLOTT: Yep.

21 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Okay.

22 MR. SCHLOTT: Yep.

23 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Let's see. And Logan, in your previous  
24 office in Building 1, so, you were kind of in the back corner. If  
25 I'm facing the building, you're like in the back left-hand

1 corner --

2 MR. SMITH: Correct.

3 MS. COOPER-SMITH: -- on the third floor.

4 MR. SMITH: Second floor.

5 MS. COOPER-SMITH: It would be the second floor.

6 MR. SMITH: Yeah, yeah.

7 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Do you -- did you have windows in --

8 MR. SMITH: No.

9 MS. COOPER-SMITH: No windows in that office. Okay. And I  
10 just want to go on record that I'm beyond excited about the fact  
11 that you guys were proactive with your public awareness for you --  
12 for your employees and getting this out. I think that's -- I  
13 mean, if I could do a dance here, I would.

14 MR. SCHLOTT: Thank you.

15 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Very excited about this. I'm glad that  
16 you really put the employees' safety first.

17 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

18 MS. COOPER-SMITH: And, you know, it's tough that a tragedy  
19 has to happen for proactiveness to happen, but it happens now.  
20 So, we will say (indiscernible) the people.

21 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah.

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

23 MR. SCHLOTT: Thank you.

24 MR. SMITH: Thank you.

25 MS. GUNARATNAM: Sorry, I just had a few more I forgot about

1 it. Did you have any other HAZMAT in your -- in Building 1 or 2?

2 MR. SMITH: No.

3 MR. SCHLOTT: No.

4 MR. SMITH: No, I -- the only thing -- the chemicals -- I  
5 sent you that chemical list here.

6 MR. SCHLOTT: Just like maintenance shop type chemicals.

7 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay, you sent me it? Or it's in the  
8 packet. Did you send it to me today?

9 MR. SMITH: Last night.

10 MS. GUNARATNAM: Oh, last night. Okay, sorry.

11 MR. SMITH: (Indiscernible).

12 MS. GUNARATNAM: Got it. Okay, I'll double check this.

13 MR. SMITH: All right, all right.

14 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah. Okay, great. And did you have  
15 policies regarding the handling of those chemicals and stuff?

16 MR. SMITH: Yeah. Everything that you asked -- yes, but  
17 they're not really HAZMAT, you know, chemicals. They're more  
18 like, you know, stuff for the AC, R22.

19 MR. SCHLOTT: Freon.

20 MR. SMITH: Freon, clean -- you know.

21 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah.

22 MR. SMITH: Nothing combustible.

23 MS. GUNARATNAM: Right. And -- because we heard during the  
24 interviews you guys had some alcohols or such that --

25 MR. SMITH: oh, for the --

1 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, for the rolling system. So, part of the  
2 cooling system would be for the rollers for Building 2, that was  
3 -- it was alcohol-based coolant.

4 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.

5 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah. So, they -- and Joe can speak to that  
6 the most the effectively. If you have -- because you're going to  
7 be with Joe, you said?

8 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yes.

9 MR. SCHLOTT: Because we had a separate safety cabinet for  
10 that.

11 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah. Okay.

12 MR. SCHLOTT: There was a protocol for all that.

13 MR. SMITH: Yes.

14 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah. I think he mentioned in his interview  
15 Joe Gerner, right?

16 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

17 MS. GUNARATNAM: Joe Gerner, right?

18 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah.

19 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. All right. Did you have any more?

20 MR. HOEPF: I do have just a few more.

21 MS. GUNARATNAM: Sure.

22 MR. HOEPF: Yeah. And thank you gentlemen, both, for being  
23 so generous with your time.

24 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah.

25 MR. HOEPF: Nearly done here, just a couple of kind of

1 clarifying questions, thanks. Logan, I think you said SQF.

2 MR. SMITH: I'm sorry, Safe Quality Foods is a global  
3 certification standard that's used for food safety.

4 MR. SCHLOTT: Food -- of food manufacturers. We just had our  
5 audit a couple weeks ago. And we received an excellent rating.  
6 Just saying.

7 MS. GUNARATNAM: Just putting that on the record.

8 MR. HOEPF: Just put that out there. Public awareness, so,  
9 we talked about the building certs, and this is, this is a list of  
10 the -- and I'm just, I'm just handing Mark here the list -- part  
11 of the, part of the response we got from UGI about some of the  
12 other activities that they did.

13 And, you know, we talked about this yesterday, but it's, you  
14 know, UGI in addition to putting it the bill inserts. They did do  
15 mailers with the scratch and sniff which we talked a little bit  
16 about. They also have a presence on social media. They got some  
17 news coverage and things like that. And they've, you know,  
18 they've got a presence at some, you know, community events and  
19 things like that. And I just, I just wanted to see if you, Mark,  
20 or Logan, did any of those other efforts from UGI reach you  
21 personally?

22 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah. In fairness, when I read through that, I  
23 mean, I participate, you know, with the Reading Phillies and that  
24 sort of thing. It's not something that, when you, when you go to  
25 events like, that you're focused on.

1 MR. HOEPF: Yeah.

2 MR. SCHLOTT: So, you know, I do see UGI, and I do see, you  
3 know, they participate in the community. They participate down at  
4 the Chamber of Commerce. But when it comes to the safety aspect  
5 down to the employee level, you know, I would say no, but they are  
6 active in the community, obviously, and participate in the  
7 community.

8 But, you know, I go back to my original statement where I  
9 think we have to identify businesses where we just can't send one  
10 card, right. If there's 8,000 people that work at East Penn,  
11 everybody should have exposure to that. Not just the person in  
12 the finance department, you know, that kind of thing

13 MR. HOEPF: Yeah. No, I understand. Yeah, I understand.  
14 Yeah, I just, I just wanted to see if, you know, kind of just  
15 speaking to, you know, are these other efforts effective? You  
16 know, is it, is it, is it --

17 (Crosstalk)

18 MR. HOEPF: I mean, I personally don't use social media  
19 myself --

20 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah. I don't either.

21 MR. HOEPF: -- much, so, I don't know -- I mean, obviously a  
22 lot of people do, you know, and I just -- I was just wondering,  
23 you know, if you can at least -- you know, I think, I think the  
24 comments before (indiscernible), you know, I think you -- we had  
25 some good discussion there. But you know -- and I know you can't



1 speak for, you know, every employee within your hundreds of  
2 employees you have, but I was just wondering if any of these, you  
3 know, had reached you personally in terms of --

4 MR. SCHLOTT: No.

5 MR. HOEPF: -- safety messaging.

6 MR. SCHLOTT: It really hasn't. No. But again, they are  
7 very active and participate in community related events. But, you  
8 know, so, I'm aware of them being out in the community, but I'm  
9 not aware of the safety aspect of it, if that makes any sense.

10 MR. HOEPF: Yeah. Logan, can you comment on --

11 MR. SMITH: No, I'm not aware of any of those. Again, you  
12 know, you (indiscernible) Phillies game, you know, they're there.

13 MR. SCHLOTT: There's all kind of sponsors there.

14 MR. SMITH: Yeah, but as far as the message of safety, no.

15 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Okay. Got you. Again, this is just  
16 about, you know, where the potential -- you know, they're there,  
17 they're being seen. You know, maybe, you know, maybe there's  
18 something else to do to, you know, convey that message and a  
19 little bit more. In terms of, you know -- and again, we talked,  
20 we talked about this with UGI yesterday, about the public  
21 awareness programs and the, you know -- I don't want to put you in  
22 a corner here, so, you know, feel free to speak your mind, but it  
23 sounds like you had an emergency response plan.

24 You know, you had evacuation procedures, you had fire alarms.  
25 It doesn't seem like gas was specifically addressed in terms of

1 that. It didn't seem like there was a specific if you smell gas,  
2 do X, in your Red Book. Is that, is that fair?

3 MR. SCHLOTT: I think that's fair. We -- it's there now.  
4 But I think that's fair. I don't think we planned for like a  
5 catastrophic event with natural gas.

6 MR. HOEPF: Right.

7 MR. SCHLOTT: I think, you know, when we were looking at  
8 issues, you know, I think -- you can correct me if I'm wrong, but,  
9 you know, on our side of the gas meter, we're looking at one or  
10 two PSI. So, you know, you have time to react to things. And  
11 again, we didn't have a plan for a main, because we don't use that  
12 in our process. Right. You know, especially in that facility. I  
13 mean, natural gas was used.

14 MR. HOEPF: Right, that's not part of your piping.

15 MR. SCHLOTT: No, no, not at all. You know, we don't --  
16 we're not caramelizing caramel with natural gas. You know, all of  
17 our tanks are electric -- you know, water jacketed electric  
18 heaters. So, we don't -- we didn't have it need, you know, that  
19 we have these big gas mains coming through our plants.

20 MR. HOEPF: Right. Right.

21 MR. SCHLOTT: So, in retrospect, obviously, we should have.  
22 But and, you know, we never -- we just didn't use the volume of  
23 natural gas.

24 MR. HOEPF: Right. Right.

25 MR. SCHLOTT: No, I -- and I understand. You know, I really,

1 I really do. And, you know, Logan, did you have anything you  
2 wanted to --

3 MR. SMITH: Well, yeah, I'm just saying, you know, thinking  
4 back when, you know, we developed, you know -- well, when I came  
5 on as far as technical services, you know, we -- a lot of the  
6 events that are in there, you base on risk, that pertains more to  
7 Mark's point, of what's going to happen at a chocolate  
8 manufacturing. And then you look at natural, you know, like  
9 flooding and things like that, because (indiscernible) near --

10 MR. SCHLOTT: We had some floods over there.

11 MR. SMITH: Electrical power outages (ph.). So, you base  
12 those type of business interruptions and procedures based on risk.  
13 And since the gas thing we don't use much --

14 MR. SCHLOTT: It's low risk.

15 MR. SMITH: -- it was low risk.

16 MR. SCHLOTT: We deemed it as low risk obviously.

17 MR. SMITH: And now --

18 MR. HOEPF: Interesting. Interesting. Yeah, risk management  
19 so you're actually seeing that as being improbable that that would  
20 happen.

21 MR. SCHLOTT: Yup.

22 MR. HOEPF: Is that, is that fair?

23 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah. I mean, again, we had a domestic water  
24 heater and two little heaters. That's the only natural gas used  
25 in that Building 2 facility. I mean, it was -- I probably use

1 more natural gas in my house, you know?

2 MR. HOEPF: Yeah. Sorry, Logan. We --

3 MR. SMITH: No, that was it. I think that's some of the  
4 reason why I believe --

5 MR. SCHLOTT: It's a fair point.

6 MR. HOEPF: Yeah, well, I mean to be -- again, to be fair and  
7 not to (indiscernible) too much of my opinion into this, but you  
8 know, I could see this happening to other businesses, you know,  
9 where it's not really a primary part of their operation. And I  
10 guess what I'm, what I'm getting to is, you know, just in terms of  
11 safety improvements, you know, do you think it would have helped  
12 if UGI would have called or something like that and said, you  
13 know, do you have methane detectors in your facilities? Do you  
14 have an emergency response plan? You know, does your emergency  
15 response plan include how to handle a gas emergency? You know, do  
16 you think that might have been helpful?

17 MR. SCHLOTT: I think it'd have been very helpful. You know,  
18 again, it's -- we all have that responsibility. But I think it  
19 would have been very helpful, you know, just to keep it at the  
20 forefront. Yeah, I do.

21 MR. HOEPF: What do you think, Logan?

22 MR. SMITH: Definitely. Yeah.

23 MR. HOEPF: Okay. I'm almost done here. I'm almost done  
24 here. The -- getting to -- I know this is tough to talk about,  
25 you know, but getting closer to the accident itself, you talked

1 about seeing Mr. Mike Brady possibly on the -- just the -- the  
2 monitor or something like that. Or was that, you said, Sue or  
3 something like that?

4 (Crosstalk)

5 MR. SCHLOTT: That was -- I thought it was Sue, and I came to  
6 find out afterwards it was Amy.

7 MR. HOEPF: Okay.

8 MR. SCHLOTT: She was responding as a safety person. I think  
9 she was responding to the incident.

10 MR. HOEPF: Okay. So, you think she was responding was kind  
11 of the interpretation --

12 MR. SCHLOTT: Because her office is right there. Her office  
13 is right there on 2nd Avenue, right next to the main door, the HR  
14 office is there, I think you saw. But --

15 MR. HOEPF: Her -- and I'm sorry if you said this, but Sue's  
16 office was in Building 1 or Building 2?

17 MR. SCHLOTT: Sue's office is in Building 1. It was  
18 upstairs.

19 MR. HOEPF: Building 1. Okay, so she had left her office and  
20 was --

21 MR. SCHLOTT: I think they called her --

22 MR. HOEPF: -- appeared to be -- oh --

23 (Crosstalk)

24 MR. SCHLOTT: I think they called either the supervisor or  
25 Sue. And Sue responded. So, you know, Sue had the authority over

1 the supervisors, so she responded. We had the right people  
2 responding to it. We had our senior maintenance mechanic. We had  
3 our plant manager respond and we had our safety director respond.

4 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Okay. So, yes, so -- and so that would be  
5 your interpretation as to what Mike Brady was doing. He was --

6 MR. SCHLOTT: Yup.

7 MR. HOEPF: -- he was responding to investigate the source of  
8 the leak --

9 MR. SCHLOTT: And then ratcheted it up.

10 MR. HOEPF: -- and then he reported it up --

11 MR. SCHLOTT: Bingo.

12 MR. HOEPF: -- from there. Okay. Okay. The -- did either  
13 one -- can only speak to your personal experience here, but we  
14 talked to Mr. William Runyon (ph.) -- not me personally, but my  
15 NTSB colleagues, as they (indiscernible) motor, and he was talking  
16 about the prior day, a smell of gas, and actually reported trying  
17 to do a little bit of troubleshooting. Not troubleshooting, but  
18 just trying to identify the source of the leak with the -- was  
19 that -- so had that bubbled up to your --

20 MR. SCHLOTT: No. Not at all.

21 MR. HOEPF: -- awareness?

22 MR. SCHLOTT: Not at all.

23 MR. HOEPF: Okay. So, neither one of -- neither of you would  
24 have heard anything?

25 MR. SMITH: No, I didn't. No.

1 MR. SCHLOTT: Not at all.

2 MR. HOEPF: The prior day? Okay. Yeah, I don't want you to  
3 comment on anything, obviously, if you're, you know, you're not  
4 aware -- you're not aware there. So, you know -- and I guess --  
5 and I know this is a tough question, this is really the last  
6 question I have. But it's -- you know, and I know it's easy to  
7 play Monday morning quarterback and all that, looking back. But,  
8 you know, why do you suppose there wasn't an evacuation? You  
9 know, in terms of -- I mean, obviously there's a lot of people  
10 responding to this.

11 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, I -- my strong opinion is they were  
12 confused. I think they were looking at the appliances in the  
13 building and couldn't find an issue and didn't know where it was  
14 coming from, you know, and started ratcheting up because they were  
15 confused. And again, I think the actual event happened so fast  
16 that by the time people responded and -- you know, in my heart, I  
17 want to believe that Amy was going in to start the evacuation  
18 process. I don't know that. But in my heart, I believe that. It  
19 happened quick.

20 MR. HOEPF: Yeah.

21 MR. SCHLOTT: I mean, we have people that, you know, walked  
22 in that hall -- the hallway I walked in, 10, 15 minutes before  
23 that, didn't smell a thing. I hit a sea of natural gas. It  
24 should have exploded. It was packed with natural gas. I don't  
25 know why it didn't explode. I guess it didn't have an ignition

1 point. But it was packed. I think it was probably coming up  
2 through the foundation of the building.

3 MR. HOEPF: Yeah, if you had been smoking a cigarette and you  
4 walked in there --

5 MR. SCHLOTT: Or I hit a light switch or something.

6 MR. HOEPF: Yeah.

7 (Crosstalk)

8 MR. SCHLOTT: It would have went. I mean, it was a lot. It  
9 wasn't a little bit. It was a lot. Like, almost take your breath  
10 away. A lot.

11 MR. HOEPF: Wow. Yeah. Yeah.

12 MR. SCHLOTT: But I had a second or two. It's on  
13 surveillance, you know. I mean, I just, I had a second or two,  
14 to --

15 MR. HOEPF: Right.

16 MR. SCHLOTT: You know, I just remember I couldn't even  
17 finish my thought. Oh, my God that's natural -- and that's when  
18 the explosion happened.

19 MR. HOEPF: And just quick clarification on that just for you  
20 personally, but -- so you -- you had only heard that there was an  
21 odor outside at that point.

22 MR. SCHLOTT: Yup.

23 MR. HOEPF: So, you -- did you even know it was gas that had  
24 been smelled?

25 MR. SCHLOTT: I did not. Nope. I didn't -- obviously, when



1 I hit that stairwell, I knew it was gas when I hit that stairwell.  
2 But it was a second or two before the explosion, literally.

3 MR. HOEPF: Yeah. And was it -- did you -- at that, at that  
4 point, you know, again, did you, did you realize that there was  
5 gas that -- did you -- was it only outside that an odor had been  
6 smelled? Did --

7 MR. SCHLOTT: Reported at that time, pre. Now post, you know  
8 I've learned a lot obviously. But pre, it was an odor outside.  
9 And again, there's trains that go by there. There's -- you know,  
10 with tar and, you know. And again, it's a public street so always  
11 remember that. We're not in an industrial complex. There are  
12 cars going by there. There's people walking by all day long.  
13 It's a public Street. So, you know, it'd be a little different if  
14 we were sitting on an industrial complex that was back in the  
15 corner. But the public's walking by there all day long. And, you  
16 know, it just -- nothing was reported.

17 MR. HOEPF: Yeah.

18 MR. SCHLOTT: But when I hit that stairwell, I just -- again,  
19 that's the only thing I witnessed, a tremendous amount of natural  
20 gas.

21 MR. HOEPF: Right, right. So, yeah. So, you were just -- I  
22 get -- what I'm trying to get to is, you know, it didn't sound  
23 like you were evacuating when you heard that information.

24 MR. SCHLOTT: No, I didn't know what was --

25 MR. HOEPF: It sounds like, it sounds like you were just

1 suspicious odor outside and you were just going to investigate,  
2 find out what was going on.

3 MR. SCHLOTT: I was going to check in with the plant manager.

4 MR. HOEPF: Is that -- okay.

5 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, before I left for the day. So, I went to  
6 check in with Sue, because I knew there was something going on  
7 outside. Nobody said emergency, nobody said anything. So, I  
8 thought, I'll check in with her before I get ready to leave.

9 MR. HOEPF: Yeah. Yeah, I got you.

10 MR. SCHLOTT: And it just -- but that, yeah, it was a minute  
11 or less from when Deena said something to me, to the explosion.

12 MR. HOEPF: Yeah, well, again, I'm really sorry you had to go  
13 through with that. And Logan, do you have -- I mean, it sounds  
14 like you had even less awareness.

15 MR. SMITH: Yeah, I --

16 MR. HOEPF: But, I mean, can you comment on just -- I mean --

17 MR. SMITH: I didn't know, I didn't know anything was going  
18 on. Nobody reported anything to me.

19 MR. HOEPF: Yeah. So, that was outside of your awareness?

20 MR. SMITH: Yeah. It wasn't anything. I didn't even know  
21 people who were outside investigating anything.

22 MR. HOEPF: Oh, you didn't -- you hadn't even seen the  
23 monitor to see that something was going on?

24 MR. SMITH: No. The monitor is up --

25 MR. SCHLOTT: With the receptionist.

1 MR. SMITH: -- in the front with the receptionist.

2 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Yup. All right. Thank you, gentlemen.  
3 Rachel, do you have anything else?

4 MS. GUNARATNAM: Just one or two. So, Deanna (ph.) just told  
5 you that there was a smell.

6 MR. SCHLOTT: She said there was an odor outside or an  
7 unusual odor.

8 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.

9 MR. SCHLOTT: One of those two things. I don't remember  
10 exactly.

11 MS. GUNARATNAM: But she said it was outside.

12 MR. SCHLOTT: She said outside. Yeah.

13 MS. GUNARATNAM: Oh, okay. Did she say anything about the  
14 employees?

15 MR. SCHLOTT: No.

16 MS. GUNARATNAM: Oh, okay.

17 MR. SCHLOTT: She might have said Mike and -- Mike and Sue  
18 are investigating it. She might have said that.

19 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.

20 MR. SCHLOTT: I'm sorry. I probably had an awareness that  
21 Mike and Sue were outside because that's how I knew to go outside  
22 to talk to Sue.

23 MS. GUNARATNAM: Right. Okay. But you weren't aware of any  
24 employee's self-evacuating or anything like that? Yeah.

25 MR. SCHLOTT: No, not at all. I had no idea what was going

1 on.

2 MS. GUNARATNAM: Did she use the word emergency or --

3 MR. SCHLOTT: No.

4 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.

5 MR. SCHLOTT: She didn't.

6 MS. GUNARATNAM: And I know this is hard. Post-accident,  
7 when you talked to -- because I'm trying to nail down  
8 understanding when employees may have first smelled gas. Did they  
9 talk to you about when they -- after the accident, about when they  
10 first smelled gas? Like timing wise?

11 MR. SCHLOTT: The only thing, you know, I spoke to a lot of  
12 the office people because they were using that hallway for my --  
13 and everybody, you know, left at 4:30, and 20 of, they're saying,  
14 I didn't smell a thing. You know, I left for the day, I didn't  
15 smell a thing. We actually had a lady standing out front there  
16 waiting for a car. Tracy Kintosh (ph.) or something like that.

17 MR. SMITH: Yeah, yeah.

18 MR. SCHLOTT: Was standing, waiting for a ride, standing  
19 right there on the corner, didn't smell a thing.

20 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.

21 MR. SCHLOTT: So, there's multiple, multiple witnesses  
22 testifying that they were there, and they didn't smell anything --

23 MS. GUNARATNAM: At 4:30.

24 MR. SCHLOTT: -- at 4:30, 20 of. Now, again, you know, check  
25 my timelines. But post-incident, you know, that's what I learned

1 because like what went on.

2 MS. GUNARATNAM: And they leave what time typically?

3 MR. SCHLOTT: It depends on their schedules. So, they'll  
4 leave from 4:00 until 5:30, quarter to 6:00, the office staff,  
5 depending on --

6 MS. GUNARATNAM: So, you have some people leaving at 4:30.

7 MR. SCHLOTT: It's a constant people -- it's a constant  
8 coming in and out.

9 MS. GUNARATNAM: So, between 4:00, 4:30, you said up to 4:40,  
10 nobody smelled gas.

11 MR. SCHLOTT: I believe -- I've talked to numerous people at  
12 4:40 that said they didn't smell anything as they were leaving  
13 there.

14 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Did anyone tell you when they did  
15 smell gas? Around what time?

16 MR. SCHLOTT: Just when Deena came back, and that whole  
17 thing. I think --

18 MS. GUNARATNAM: Just when she reported it to you.

19 MR. SCHLOTT: -- and again, just double check me on this.  
20 But my recollection is we had one of our office staff leave, that  
21 she parks her car back with us. Linda Lash (ph.). She left the  
22 parking lot and drove up through Cherry Street and smelled  
23 something. She didn't know what it was. She called back to Deena  
24 to report that, hey, there's some kind of smell on 2nd Avenue.  
25 So, I think that was the first report that came into the office of

1 the smell as she was leaving.

2 That was right around the 4:40-ish timeframe or something  
3 like that. And I think -- I don't know if it was in parallel or  
4 whatever where Mike responded, or the production employees were  
5 over there because the production line was not running. It was  
6 down.

7 MS. GUNARATNAM: Right. They were changing over, right?

8 MR. SCHLOTT: Changing over and cleaning, end of the day  
9 Friday. I think some of the people were on break. So, they were  
10 taking a break. They weren't even working.

11 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah. Do you know the break times? What  
12 typically are the break times for staff around that time?

13 MR. SCHLOTT: It varies a little bit.

14 MR. SMITH: It does vary a little bit, but it was somewhere  
15 between 4:00 and 5:00 (ph.).

16 MR. SCHLOTT: Usually around 5:00 is second shift's first  
17 break, and like 7:00 or 8:00 is their second break.

18 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.

19 MR. SCHLOTT: It can vary a little bit.

20 MR. SMITH: But when they're cleaning --

21 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, they can --

22 MR. SCHLOTT: -- because there's no production. So, when  
23 it's cleaning, they can kind of -- as long they get 20 minutes.

24 MS. GUNARATNAM: Sure. Okay. So, between 4:45 and 5:00,  
25 they're getting --

1 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah.

2 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

3 MS. GUNARATNAM: -- taking breaks. Okay. That's a typical  
4 break time?

5 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, that's normal.

6 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

7 MR. SCHLOTT: I mean, I would say goodbye to a lot of  
8 employees, a lot like if I would go out at 5:30 and be on break, I  
9 would say hi to them and --

10 MS. GUNARATNAM: Oh, okay.

11 MR. SCHLOTT: So, typically.

12 MS. GUNARATNAM: And are they outside for break or are  
13 they --

14 MR. SCHLOTT: Some of them will stand outside. Yeah.

15 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah. Do any of them like -- when you were  
16 walking back to the building after your meeting, were any  
17 employees on break?

18 MR. SCHLOTT: I'm sorry. Say that again.

19 MS. GUNARATNAM: When you -- before you entered in the  
20 stairwell, you said you walked back from your meeting.

21 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes. Yes. Inside.

22 MS. GUNARATNAM: Were the --

23 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah. I couldn't tell from the surveillance  
24 camera.

25 MS. GUNARATNAM: Oh, but you -- that was the only employee

1 you saw was the person going into Building 2?

2 MR. SCHLOTT: There were, there were some employees standing  
3 on the front steps there.

4 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah. At building --

5 MR. SCHLOTT: I couldn't really tell who they were because  
6 they have hairnets on and stuff. And I saw the white jacket,  
7 which I thought was Sue, but I think it turned out to be Amy.

8 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Yep. That's all I got.

9 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Can I just ask two really quick questions?

10 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah.

11 MS. COOPER-SMITH: And then be done. This is Terri. Would  
12 your maintenance folks know -- I don't know if it would be your  
13 maintenance folks or your plant manager, know, about PA one call,  
14 and making a one call for anything that's being done in the area?  
15 One call is when you --

16 MR. SCHLOTT: Dig.

17 MS. COOPER-SMITH: -- you know, when people are going to dig  
18 in your area, and you have to mark out your lines.

19 MR. SMITH: No.

20 MS. COOPER-SMITH: No?

21 MR. SMITH: I'm not aware of that.

22 MR. SCHLOTT: This is Mark. Yeah, our engineering -- some of  
23 the senior maintenance engineering maintenance supervisors, they  
24 would be aware of that. And if we'd ever do anything to dig  
25 around the property, we would -- because they were just over here



1 the other day, yeah, marking.

2 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Okay. And also, my last question is, you  
3 said that employees can self-evacuate. Right? So, if in the  
4 middle of a really busy shift, like let's say it's like, you know,  
5 February timeframe or whatever and there's people on the  
6 production lines and you have your shift supervisors and all that  
7 stuff, and they see a fire or they smell gas or whatever, the  
8 person that's actually working on the line, the employees, if they  
9 were to smell or see anything, could they just walk away from  
10 there and be self-evacuated or would they have to tell somebody  
11 first and then self -- and then evacuate?

12 MR. SCHLOTT: We -- I'd like to answer that. Yeah, so part  
13 of our new natural gas policy is they can evacuate immediately.

14 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Okay.

15 MR. SCHLOTT: Now the problem we struggle with, maybe where  
16 UGI could help us, is, you know, in a gas leak, how do you  
17 evacuate the building? You know, the pull -- you can't pull the  
18 pull switches locally there. So, it's a little bit of something  
19 that we're still kind of working through. Right. Because if  
20 there's natural gas in the room, you don't want to pull a fire  
21 switch, right, if that would spark. So, but they can self-  
22 evacuate.

23 MS. COOPER-SMITH: So, prior to the accident --

24 MR. SCHLOTT: And it has happened in the past.

25 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Okay. So, prior to the accident, it's the

1 same policy that they can --

2 MR. SCHLOTT: We have not changed that. Yes.

3 MS. COOPER-SMITH: So, if they could smell gas or fire  
4 anything, they could walk -- literally stop what they're doing and  
5 walk out the building.

6 MR. SCHLOTT: There's pull stations located different parts  
7 of the building that they can actually pull the fire alarm.

8 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Okay. Would they be -- are they expected  
9 to pull the fire alarm, or are they expected to evacuate?

10 MR. SCHLOTT: It -- you can speak to the training, because I  
11 don't want to mislead.

12 MR. SMITH: I'm -- well -- if there's a fire, you can pull  
13 it. As far as the smell, the odor, anything like that, we never  
14 did any training on that part of it.

15 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Right. But my question is, are they  
16 expected to pull the fire alarm if they see a fire?

17 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes.

18 MR. SMITH: That's what we allow them -- we tell them that,  
19 yes, if there's a fire, you can pull it.

20 MR. SCHLOTT: And that's part of their annual training.

21 MR. SMITH: Correct.

22 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Right. But if they left without pulling  
23 it and then, you know, maybe go down the street and then call 911,  
24 that would be acceptable as well? Or you would want them to pull  
25 that --

1 MR. SCHLOTT: We would want them to evacuate the building. I  
2 mean --

3 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

4 MR. SCHLOTT: -- any response would be acceptable. But we  
5 obviously would do a corrective action, you know, say, look, we  
6 want to evacuate the building.

7 MS. COOPER-SMITH: Okay.

8 MR. SMITH: Right.

9 MR. SCHLOTT: Yeah, I understand.

10 MS. GUNARATNAM: I'm sorry. Just to tag off with that. Was  
11 there ever a fire last year where the fire department was called  
12 or --

13 MR. SCHLOTT: No fire. There could have been a false alarm.

14 MS. GUNARATNAM: Oh, okay.

15 MR. SCHLOTT: And it would be documented if there was.

16 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

17 MR. SCHLOTT: You have those sheets, right?

18 MR. SMITH: I don't know if we document if it's a -- if it  
19 was nothing. I would have to --

20 MR. SCHLOTT: Double check that.

21 MR. SMITH: -- double check on that because I'm not --

22 MS. GUNARATNAM: I think I had asked you in the response if  
23 you had any previous fire.

24 MR. SMITH: Yeah. No, I don't -- I'm not aware of any fires.  
25 But there are times, as Mark said, like, for example, if we're

1 testing the sprinklers and you make (indiscernible) call protect  
2 alarms, hey, I want you to take this offline some certain time and  
3 they don't, because the sprinklers, it's going to go off, and  
4 (indiscernible).

5 MR. SCHLOTT: Or the infamous air bubble. Right.

6 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

7 MR. SCHLOTT: You bring the system up and two days later the  
8 alarms go off again because there's air in the system.

9 MS. GUNARATNAM: Wow. Okay. But yeah, nothing -- no fire  
10 occurred last year or the year before.

11 MR. SMITH: No.

12 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. I was just curious how employees  
13 responded to those incidents if it did happen.

14 MR. SMITH: Well, you mentioned one over here in Building 3,  
15 though.

16 MR. SCHLOTT: Yup, yup.

17 MR. SMITH: That was, yeah, that one year.

18 MR. SCHLOTT: A couple of years ago.

19 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

20 MS. GUNARATNAM: And they evacuated?

21 MR. SCHLOTT: That was three years ago.

22 (Crosstalk)

23 MR. SCHLOTT: -- happens, everything is -- they follow the  
24 procedures.

25 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Okay. Great.

1 MR. SCHLOTT: Absolutely.

2 MR. HOEPF: I just wanted to clarify something, based on what  
3 you were saying Terri. I mean, you know, I think -- correct me if  
4 I'm wrong here --

5 MR. SCHLOTT: Sure.

6 MR. HOEPF: -- both of you guys, but if what you said here is  
7 prior to the accident, obviously (indiscernible) a lot of great  
8 post-accident actions, accident actions, but prior to the  
9 accident, it sounds like both of you would agree that employees  
10 were empowered to self-evacuate. Right?

11 MR. SCHLOTT: Yes. Yes.

12 MR. HOEPF: But that really wasn't an official policy on  
13 that. And that there was really no training on that either. Is  
14 that fair?

15 MR. SMITH: I would have to look at the actual wording of the  
16 annual training that we do for each employee to see what that says  
17 and actually look at the actual procedure.

18 MR. HOEPF: Okay. Okay, that's fine. Yeah.

19 MR. SMITH: I'm not sure that verbiage is actually in there,  
20 put it that way.

21 MR. HOEPF: Right, right. Yeah. So, I think, I think,  
22 again, you know, not to get into analysis, but, you know, you  
23 know, there's always room for improvement on things.

24 MR. SMITH: Yes.

25 MR. HOEPF: -- like making the employees --

1 MR. SCHLOTT: Absolutely.

2 MR. HOEPF: -- aware that they're empowered to evacuate would  
3 be something you're now doing.

4 MR. SCHLOTT: Absolutely. Yeah, absolutely.

5 MR. HOEPF: So, that's, you know, put that in the  
6 improvement.

7 MR. SMITH: Correct.

8 MR. HOEPF: -- bucket. So, that's all I wanted to say, so --

9 MR. SCHLOTT: Very good.

10 MR. HOEPF: -- I thank you again, gentlemen. You've been  
11 very generous with your time. If nobody has anything else.

12 (Crosstalk)

13 (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:           NATURAL GAS BUILDING EXPLOSION AND FIRE  
NEAR WEST READING, PENNSYLVANIA  
ON MARCH 24, 2023  
Interview of Logan Smith and Mark Schlott

ACCIDENT NO.:               PLD23LR002

PLACE:                       Wyomissing, Pennsylvania

DATE:                         Wednesday, August 16, 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.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Melissa Bousquette  
Transcriber