

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: \*

NATURAL GAS-FUELED EXPLOSION OF \*  
RESIDENCE, DALLAS, TEXAS \*  
FEBRUARY 23, 2018 \*

\* Accident No.: PLD18FR002

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: MICHAEL MEADOR

Hampton Inn and Suites  
Dallas, Texas

Monday,  
March 5, 2018

## APPEARANCES:

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Emergency Response Group  
National Transportation Safety Board

JOSE CHEVEREZ, Pipeline Inspector  
Railroad Commission of Texas

MICHAEL JONES, Accident Investigator  
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration  
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I N T E R V I E W

(10:18 a.m.)

1  
2  
3 MS. GUNARATNAM: Good morning. My name is Rachael  
4 Gunaratnam, and I'm an investigator with the NTSB. Today is March  
5 5th, and the time is 10:18 a.m. We are currently at the Hampton  
6 Inn in Dallas, Texas. We are here to investigate the house  
7 explosion at 3534 Espanola Drive in Dallas on Friday, February  
8 23rd, 2018.

9 In this interview we will be talking to Chief Mike Meador.  
10 I'd like to first go around the room, and introduce yourself,  
11 spell your name and title.

12 My name is Rachael Gunaratnam, R-A-C-H-A-E-L,  
13 G-U-N-A-R-A-T-N-A-M. I work with the NTSB.

14 MR. CHEVEREZ: Jose Cheverez, J-O-S-E, C-H-E-V-E-R-E-Z,  
15 Railroad Commission of Texas, pipeline inspector.

16 MR. MURDOCK: Phillip Murdock, P-H-I-L-L-I-P, M-U-R-D-O-C-K,  
17 Director of Engineering and Compliance with Atmos Energy.

18 MR. JONES: Michael Jones, accident investigator with PHMSA,  
19 Oklahoma City office. M-I-C-H-A-E-L, J-O-N-E-S.

20 MR. MEADOR: Michael Meador, M-I-C-H-A-E-L, M-E-A-D-O-R. I'm  
21 a battalion chief with Dallas Fire-Rescue.

22 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay, great.

## INTERVIEW OF MICHAEL MEADOR

23  
24 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

25 Q. Could you just let -- give us a bit of a background as to how

1 long you've been with Dallas Fire-Rescue and your positions?

2 A. I've been with Dallas Fire-Rescue -- I've promoted up through  
3 the ranks. I started as a firefighter/paramedic on the  
4 department, promoted up through the progressive ranks, which is  
5 driver, lieutenant, captain, battalion chief. I have been on for  
6 17 years.

7 Q. All right. And what is your training and background, in that  
8 sense?

9 A. I've worked in a few different departments on there. Like I  
10 said, I was in paramedics; I was in EMS, a portion of what we do.  
11 I've also been in our safety division as a wellness/fitness  
12 coordinator. I did that as a captain, at the rank of captain.  
13 And then I promoted to battalion chief. All other ranks were in  
14 operations in the field, and I've been a battalion chief for 5  
15 years now.

16 Q. Okay. And what station are you out of?

17 A. I am currently at Station 28, which is Battalion 4.

18 Q. Okay. So we'll go back to February 23rd, and to start us  
19 off, from when you first heard about the incident all the way to  
20 the point where you --

21 A. February 23rd was actually an off-shift day for me, but I was  
22 hired back. I was working overtime. Was notified early on at the  
23 station -- I saw that the run -- we have a computer screen that  
24 pops up addresses and stuff with significant runs; namely, we will  
25 see every fire in the city of Dallas on that screen or runs

1 assigned to personnel at that station. I was walking through the  
2 watch room and saw that computer screen, which denoted a fire call  
3 at -- on Espanola.

4 I kind of immediately thought, man, we had a fire over there  
5 yesterday. That's kind of in the same area. I worked the day  
6 before and heard the fire on the radio, kind of got an idea of  
7 what was going on. We were just listening to the radio. I did  
8 not make that run.

9 So I went back to the office and started listening to the  
10 scanner, and the run was already in progress. Everybody was  
11 showing up. Everything's going on, I didn't hear the size-up or  
12 what was going on, but I did hear the incident commander calling  
13 for additional apparatus, namely ambulances, to transport injured  
14 personnel -- or injured citizens on the scene, not firemen. And  
15 that kind of escalated from that point.

16 I got busy that morning getting ready for the shift and  
17 didn't really hear much after that, so --

18 Q. Around what time was that?

19 A. Oh, goodness. Seemed like it was early in the morning, so  
20 I'm thinking 7-ish, 7:30. I can't -- I'm not positive. That's  
21 just an estimate. If I was walking through there, it was probably  
22 somewhere between 6:30 and 7:30 when I heard it, or so.

23 Q. Oh, okay. And --

24 A. It may have been a little later. So --

25 Q. Oh, okay. And you were coming off a shift or --

1 A. I was -- I worked the previous day, 24 hours, from 7:00 to  
2 7:00. I was waiting to get a call to see if I was going to work  
3 overtime the next day, which I did, so --

4 Q. Got it. So you heard that around 6:30, 7?

5 A. That's an estimate.

6 Q. Right.

7 A. Kind of a rough estimate. I was walking through there and I  
8 remember seeing it, so --

9 Q. Yeah. So after you heard about it and heard every -- all  
10 that, that you described, what happened after that?

11 A. Like I said, my typical -- what I do is I'll -- if I see a  
12 run or something like that in the city, I go to my office and turn  
13 the scanner on. And that's what I did. I turned the scanner on  
14 and I just kind of heard the radio communication of the run, what  
15 was going on, and do distinctly remember them calling for  
16 additional ambulances.

17 Q. Right. And after that?

18 A. To the best of my memory, I got a phone call, said I was  
19 working overtime. So we kind of started our day in the office,  
20 just typical, checking emails, responding to emails, phone calls,  
21 staffing, getting people in the right places for the day, and just  
22 kind of got caught up in that, not really paying attention to what  
23 was going on, on this run.

24 Q. Did you go home?

25 A. I did not go home. I stayed there for -- this was the 23rd.

1 I actually worked overtime on the 23rd, so --

2 Q. Oh, okay. So you continued working, okay.

3 A. I continued working. So I'm working 48 hours in a row.

4 Q. Right.

5 A. So I'm there for the additional 24, so --

6 Q. Okay. So after that?

7 A. And then after that, kind of went through our regular day.

8 Probably ate lunch. And then shortly before dinner -- I

9 distinctly remember 1700, 5:00, something like that; it's almost  
10 on the button, we got a phone call saying, hey, we need you guys  
11 to go relieve Battalion 7 on Espanola; they've been there all day.  
12 So we loaded up. Pretty much by our standard of doing things,  
13 it's an immediate response but not a Code 3 response. So we  
14 loaded our stuff up and then headed over, drove over to Espanola  
15 to relieve them.

16 Q. Okay. And that was around --

17 A. That's around 5:00; 1700.

18 Q. 5:00. Oh, okay. And when you arrived on scene?

19 A. It was really close -- it was just prior to 1800. So I would  
20 say 1730, 1745, somewhere in there. Traffic that time of day is  
21 just tough around here, as you've probably seen.

22 Q. Yes.

23 A. It's tough, so it takes us a while to get over, and we're  
24 really kind of going across town. I'm in a northeast division,  
25 now I'm going to the northwest division of the city. So it's a



1 pretty good trip over there.

2 Q. And who responded exactly?

3 A. Battalion 4.

4 Q. Which included?

5 A. Included myself, and it just so happens my actual driver,  
6 also hired back for overtime that day. His name is Russell Hogan.

7 Q. Okay. Just the two of you?

8 A. Just the two of us, yes.

9 Q. All right. So when you arrived?

10 A. When I arrived, we parked our vehicle, made our way to the  
11 command post, walked in. Very hectic. A lot of things going on,  
12 of course, in the command post. It appeared to have two very  
13 distinct commanders, I guess. We had -- we send two battalion  
14 chiefs to every structure fire. The idea is one incident  
15 commander, one person in charge; and one person as a safety  
16 officer. So that's kind of what was going on. But there -- in  
17 this situation, I think they were really kind of taking a -- both  
18 trying to handle this incident, so -- with so much going on.

19 So Chief Clumpner and Captain Combs were both in the command  
20 van with several other people. I can't remember. They just --  
21 very hectic. So I walked in, and then we kind of immediately  
22 began kind of the whole "Let me explain to you what's going on."

23 Q. Right.

24 A. And they started in on that. And I had to stop them a couple  
25 times because things were so hectic in there. It's just kind of

1 like, hey, you know, let's stop that for a second and talk  
2 distinctly, because I wanted to get a good idea of what was going  
3 on.

4 So we got that all figured out. Probably both of them stayed  
5 around. Captain Combs stayed around for 30 minutes. I took over.  
6 And if we want to get into the details of what was going on, I can  
7 do that at this point.

8 Q. Yes.

9 A. He explained to me that we had kind of two very distinct  
10 operations going on within this one incident. The number one was  
11 the evacuations of the homes in Division 1, what we're calling  
12 Division 1 area, and then they had recently begun a Division 2, a  
13 separate area, which was actually, if I remember my directions  
14 correctly, west of Marsh; two roads west of Marsh, and those were  
15 -- he explained to me that Atmos was basically communicating with  
16 us the best places to evacuate, kind of this is their area of  
17 concern. When they communicated that area of concern to us, then  
18 we would send people in to evacuate.

19 They had moved on to that Division 2 recently and were  
20 working on evacuating. Fortunately it only involved two streets,  
21 and actually only one side of each street. So kind of the --

22 Q. Sorry. There's some maps right there.

23 A. The streets that I remember were Bolivar and Cortez west of  
24 Marsh to Mixon. So Bolivar, Cortez. So by this map here, this  
25 south -- the houses on the south side of Cortez and the houses on

1 the north side of Bolivar, all the way down to Mixon. When I  
2 showed up, those evacuations were in progress.

3 Q. Is that Division 1?

4 A. That's Division 2.

5 Q. Division 2. Okay.

6 A. Yes. Division 2 was being evacuated. All of Division 1 had  
7 been evacuated, which presented a very distinct problem because it  
8 was an immediate evacuation. The second part of the operation we  
9 were dealing with is getting the people back to their homes to get  
10 medicine, pets, very necessary items. We were starting that  
11 process. There were several people at the command post that we  
12 were dealing with in that.

13 So Captain Combs, within 30 minutes or so, wanted to go check  
14 on some other things that were going on. One of the things he  
15 wanted to do was go to the rec center -- I think the Walnut Hill  
16 Rec Center -- where we had kind of a, kind of a contact point for  
17 people who had been evacuated to go to. He wanted to go over and  
18 check out and see what was going on over there so he could  
19 communicate that to me. So he left within 30 minutes, 45 minutes  
20 to go over there.

21 And then Captain -- or Chief Clumpner stayed there. And the  
22 reason I bring that up is because then I divided communicating  
23 with Chief Clumpner. We've got two very distinct things going  
24 over here. I'm going to take care of one, which is the evacuation  
25 process. He took over the transportation of citizens back to

1 their homes to retrieve necessary items. So we began that process  
2 pretty much, I would say, an hour and a half after my arrival. My  
3 best guess would be between 7:30 and 8:00, when we started  
4 transporting people back to their homes.

5 Q. If people arrived earlier before that, what did you do with  
6 them?

7 A. They were standing in line. We told them we'd get to them as  
8 soon as we could. We tried to keep an open line of communication  
9 with them, giving them updates. What we were waiting on at that  
10 point was actual fire department apparatus to transport them in.  
11 We really couldn't function in the area with the big apparatus  
12 because of all the street closures, so we were looking for  
13 Suburbans and passenger vehicles to transport them in. So we --  
14 there was quite a delay in getting those apparatus to us. So --

15 Q. Was there a DART bus there already or --

16 A. Not there. Not when I arrived. DART bus was called for.  
17 Just by talking to Chief Clumpner and Captain Combs, two DART  
18 buses were called for. They were actually underutilized, so they  
19 released them. They told them to go, so --

20 Q. Right. Because they -- those DART buses can't fit all  
21 those --

22 A. Oh, no.

23 Q. Right. Okay.

24 A. No. The way that the neighborhoods were -- we had, you know,  
25 road barriers, actual work going on. I don't know what -- to what

1 scale the work was going on, but the amount of work that I saw  
2 going on was limited to what I saw coming into the command center,  
3 command post. I believe I saw one or two areas right off of Marsh  
4 where they were digging. So I didn't really put eyes on what was  
5 going on in the area. I just know that -- through communication  
6 with the companies that there seemed to be a lot of work going on.

7 Q. Okay. Okay, so then that was about an hour and a half --  
8 like so around 7:30, you were saying.

9 A. 7:30, 8:00, we finally got the vehicles there. Companies  
10 were wrapping up the secondary evacuation, kind of a secondary  
11 search, a follow-up search of the houses in Division 2. So they  
12 were wrapping that up. It was coming to a close pretty quick, so  
13 we were close to done with that by 8:00. We're wrapping that up.

14 And then we started moving people into the initial Division 1  
15 area where the rapid evacuation took place, to get medicines,  
16 stuff like that. That was a very slow process because even though  
17 we were using three apparatus initially and we had two or -- two  
18 companies, engine companies, four-man crews, we split them up, put  
19 them on an apparatus and started carrying people in. We even took  
20 over our battalion chief's vehicles, just cleaned those out and  
21 started moving. So we had five apparatus moving. But that still  
22 was a very slow process. It took us, it took us a good 3 hours to  
23 get everybody moved in, out. And the line was -- after 3 hours,  
24 we still had a few people kind of showing up.

25 As far as that process goes, I'd say 11:40, 11:30, Chief

1 Clumpner -- I told him that, since we were done with that part of  
2 the incident around 11:30, 11:40, that he could go. He had been  
3 there all day, so I told him, hey, you need to go. So he kind of  
4 relinquished everything to me at that point, so I'm in charge of  
5 the entire incident now.

6 We put a captain in charge of transporting people at that  
7 time and let the captain kind of handle that. It was really -- we  
8 were scaling down rather quickly on that. So we went from using  
9 five apparatus down to just two apparatus and kind of slowly  
10 moving people around. At midnight, I shut it completely down.  
11 Anybody that showed up after midnight, I just told them we'll  
12 just, we'll handle it tomorrow. So as far as transporting people  
13 back, after midnight we wouldn't do it.

14 And then going back -- this happened, I would say, close to  
15 2100, 9:00 at night, I had an Atmos rep come to the command post  
16 and tell me, hey, the area that we asked you all to evacuate, you  
17 all are -- basically you all haven't evacuated the area we asked  
18 you to evacuate. So then things got really confusing. I was  
19 deescalating the incident, so around 2100, somewhere in there, now  
20 I have to escalate it back up.

21 So I called for four more apparatus. Because the area that  
22 we -- I can give you the -- it was a very distinct area. It was  
23 from Bolivar on the north side -- so Bolivar's here. Bolivar on  
24 the north side, Marsh on this side south to Almazan, up to -- I'm  
25 kind of drawing a blank on the other street. I can look it up on

1 the map and tell you what it was.

2 This involved three apartment complexes and a residential  
3 area, small residential area. Made that contact with them, and it  
4 was like, get everybody -- so I called four more apparatus,  
5 because I was informed that, you know, the apartment complexes are  
6 going to take a while; they're going to take a while. So in  
7 talking to Atmos, they told me that the gas was shut off to that  
8 area right now. So then we began to have the discussion about the  
9 necessity to evacuate the apartments because it's so time  
10 consuming, so manpower intensive.

11 Atmos came back to me probably an hour and a half later, and  
12 we were kind of on hold. I started evacuating the residential  
13 homes but not the multifamily -- the apartments. Our best guess  
14 was an additional 250 people if we had to deal with the  
15 apartments. So they came back to me later and said, look, this is  
16 what we're going to do: I think we're good on the apartments.  
17 Don't worry about the apartments. We're going to try to get them  
18 -- I believe it's a CNG machine in. It's, you know, a --

19 Q. Gas detector?

20 A. No, it's something to provide them gas.

21 Q. Oh, okay.

22 A. So they were going to -- their theory was every apartment  
23 complex for the most part has a boiler, a boiler room, and that's  
24 how they heat the -- so they knew if they could connect to that  
25 boiler room, they could heat the complex or whatever they needed

1 to do. So at that point in time, it was basically, okay, don't  
2 worry about evacuating them; we feel like we're good on the  
3 apartments. Let's evacuate the residential area because that  
4 allows us access into there. And that's what we did. So we  
5 evacuated the residential area, the single-family homes. Got  
6 people out.

7 One issue we had, we had one person who was very insistent on  
8 not leaving. So we got into the discussion of what authority do  
9 we have. We were not given -- just knowing that under the city  
10 charter, under, you know, county charter or state charter, they do  
11 have something in there that allows us to force people to leave  
12 their home, but that requires certain documentation, political  
13 influence to give us actually signed paperwork that says these  
14 people must leave. We didn't have that.

15 So we defaulted to -- which we had to do most of the day, was  
16 encourage people to leave. Early in the morning, that wasn't hard  
17 because the house explosion and everything was fresh on  
18 everybody's mind and they kind of were okay with leaving at that  
19 point. This lady was disabled, in a wheelchair. We finally  
20 convinced her to leave. I had to utilize a City of Dallas  
21 ambulance to transport her to a hotel along with her wheelchair.  
22 So --

23 Also in the initial -- or in the secondary, Division 2, we  
24 had a person that was bedridden we had to transport to a family  
25 member's home utilizing a City of Dallas ambulance and a fire crew



1 because it was a fairly large person. So it took quite a, quite a  
2 few people to move them. But fortunately, that was -- the area we  
3 took her -- the house we took that person to was very close to the  
4 area we were in, so pretty low impact there.

5 Q. And can give you me a time for --

6 A. That was not long after I arrived, somewhere around 8:00 when  
7 that issue came up for the person in Division 2, the bedridden  
8 person.

9 Q. Eight a.m. -- or 8:00 p.m.

10 A. Eight p.m.

11 Q. Eight p.m. Okay.

12 A. Eight p.m. Not far -- not long after I arrived, we took care  
13 of that. The secondary evacuation or the -- I guess what would be  
14 considered Division 3 now. I mean, we're in a third evacuation  
15 area. In that -- in Division 3, the person that was in a  
16 wheelchair, that was late in -- that was closer to midnight before  
17 we could convince that person to leave, so -- and they were  
18 transported to a hotel on Richardson.

19 Q. Okay. So the person who was the larger person was in  
20 Division 2?

21 A. Was in Division 2, yes.

22 Q. Got it. Okay. All right. And so that happened around  
23 midnight with the -- transporting the woman in the wheelchair?

24 A. The one in Division 3 --

25 Q. Three.

1 A. -- was at midnight, closer to midnight, yes.

2 Q. So when did -- so the evacuation for Division 3 started  
3 around --

4 A. We started the residential homes probably close to 10:00.  
5 And we were kind of on standby for Atmos to inform us about the  
6 apartments.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. And then, like I said, the evacuation of the apartments never  
9 happened. Talking to the Atmos rep, talking to -- kind of getting  
10 an idea of what was going on, I felt fairly comfortable with not  
11 evacuating the apartments, so --

12 Q. Oh, okay. So that never happened?

13 A. That never happened, so -- until, from my understanding, 3  
14 days later, I think, which -- not mandatory still, but --

15 Q. For those specific apartments?

16 A. For those apartments, I believe they fell in that area.

17 Q. Okay. So Division 3, just to rehash, was the apartments and  
18 that residential area?

19 A. Small residential area, yes.

20 Q. Got it. And that happened, started -- well, the residential  
21 area started around 10:00?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Okay. So -- okay. So after that, you were on standby  
24 waiting to hear about the apartments and they never initiated  
25 that.

1 A. No.

2 Q. And then what happened after that?

3 A. After that, we're into midnight. Like I said, when people --  
4 when citizens would show up after midnight, I was like, look,  
5 we're pretty stretched thin right now; let's just wait till in the  
6 morning. Everybody seemed to be okay with that. They didn't get  
7 upset about it. They understood it was late, and I tried to be  
8 compassionate to the fact they had had a long day and then had  
9 been removed from their house. So I asked them to wait till about  
10 8 the next morning, show up.

11 At that point, I had kind of start releasing companies,  
12 sending them back home, keeping kind of a skeleton crew mostly to  
13 address any emergency situation that happened in that area.  
14 Because our dispatch had done what they call a geofence of this  
15 area, and geofencing is basically they cordon off an area within  
16 the city and they say, okay, if any runs, any calls come from that  
17 area, they go through the command post. So I kept a skeleton  
18 crew, and if they called us for, you know, somebody still happened  
19 to be in there, for smelling gas, a medical emergency, anything of  
20 that sort, we would send somebody in to investigate it from the  
21 command post. It wouldn't actually be dispatched, so --

22 Q. And that command post was where?

23 A. The command post was actually on Webb Chapel at Storey Lane.  
24 I believe it was actually designated Webb Chapel and Larga. Yeah.

25 Q. But it was actually Webb Chapel and Storey, yeah.

1 A. Webb Chapel. It was right on the corner of Webb Chapel and  
2 Storey.

3 Q. Storey. I got it. Okay. So -- sorry, can you explain that  
4 about the you kept the skeletal frame of --

5 A. I kept essentially two engine companies because I didn't have  
6 anybody assigned. So there were two engine companies that are  
7 staffed with four personnel. So 8 personnel and myself and my  
8 driver, so a total of 10 fire department personnel after midnight.

9 Q. Got it.

10 A. Or shortly after midnight.

11 Q. And where did you guys stay?

12 A. We stayed in the command post. The engine companies, they  
13 pretty much just stayed on their apparatus and waited for us to  
14 call them if we needed them for something. After that time, other  
15 than dealing with people walking up to the command post, we didn't  
16 have anything spectacular happening, anything of -- that I recall,  
17 where I did dispatch somebody into that area. So --

18 Q. So when you say dispatch into the area, they're not coming  
19 from the command post; they're coming from another station?

20 A. No, they're at the command post. It's part of the two engine  
21 companies that are waiting. We get a call from dispatch and they  
22 say, hey, you know, we're getting a call at this address, which is  
23 in your area, saying that there's this going on. We didn't have  
24 any of that, so I didn't send anybody in there.

25 Q. Oh, I see. So if it came from that area, these guys would be

1 the ones --

2 A. Yes. They would call us and say, hey, you've got a --  
3 somehow you have, for example, a medical emergency. Somebody's  
4 calling for a medical emergency; they're still in that area. You  
5 know, they may have got back to their house somehow unbeknownst to  
6 us. So I'd call -- they'd call me and say, hey, this is going on,  
7 can you send somebody to look at it? And I'd call one of the two  
8 engine companies and say go. That never happened for -- when I --  
9 after midnight, nobody really moved through the area. We were all  
10 kind of staged.

11 Q. So can you -- when you say area, can you tell me which area  
12 that dispatch --

13 A. My understanding that the area that we were limiting an  
14 emergency response into is the area from Marsh west, Marsh west to  
15 the north -- I can't remember what road that was to the north. It  
16 was either one or two streets north of Espanola, and then to the  
17 south to Bolivar, all the way over to Webb Chapel.

18 Q. Is that Webb Chapel? Okay.

19 A. I believe so. It's kind of hard to tell on this map. But it  
20 was over to Webb Chapel, because our command post was at Webb  
21 Chapel. So we were, we were kind of over here --

22 Q. Got it.

23 A. -- and then everything over to Marsh.

24 Q. Okay. Could you describe it in blocks?

25 A. Like number of blocks?

1 Q. That you were covering.

2 A. When I arrived, my best estimate was 10 city blocks, is what  
3 we kind of -- Captain Combs communicated to me that he had a 10-  
4 city-block area that we were kind of working in.

5 Q. Right. Okay. Okay, so you had nothing happen overnight.

6 A. Nothing really that I recall happening overnight. Some  
7 communication between Atmos's command post. Really, I would walk  
8 over and follow up with them, see what they had going on. So  
9 nothing spectacular, nobody to send in.

10 And I actually had an Atmos rep in the command post with me.  
11 I don't recall her name, but her kind of job description was  
12 handling the hotels and stuff. So if we had somebody walk up and  
13 say, hey, I live in this area, I need a place to stay, she -- I  
14 would send them to her and she would work on getting them a hotel.

15 Q. How long was she there for?

16 A. She was probably in the command post for 2 hours. So I would  
17 say from 9:00 to 11.

18 Q. A.M., in Saturday --

19 A. P.M.

20 Q. P.M. Okay.

21 A. P.M. Yeah, everything that I did took place at night into  
22 the early morning.

23 Q. Morning, okay. That's 2/23. Okay. So she handled it, so  
24 from 9 p.m. to 11. So residents who came to you after midnight,  
25 what did you do with -- how did you --

1 A. I believe I had two total, maybe three. I just told them  
2 that, hey, we're shutting down operations for tonight. And I did  
3 explain it to them, and everybody seemed to be okay with it. I  
4 would send them to the rec center or send them to the Atmos rep,  
5 who was able to get them a hotel.

6 But really, I don't remember -- one person spoke with the  
7 Atmos rep, but I don't believe they ended up staying in a hotel.  
8 They just needed -- like it wasn't medicine. That was my number  
9 one question, is do you -- is what you need an absolutely  
10 necessity? And they -- it was, I need some clothes or this and  
11 that. And I said, well, that can wait.

12 The other one wanted to take his dogs back home. And I said,  
13 well, that's probably not a good idea; let's wait on taking your  
14 dogs back home. And he wasn't happy that he couldn't, because he  
15 didn't know what he was going to do with them. But I'm like, it's  
16 just not a good idea because I can't promise you can get there  
17 tomorrow to feed them. And that's what I explained to him, so --

18 Q. Any issues with language or anything? Challenges there?

19 A. No. Not when I was there. I think we actually had an Atmos  
20 rep that was able to translate for us. She was around. She was  
21 kind of bouncing back and forth between our command post and  
22 Atmos, constantly asking us if we needed anything or anything like  
23 that. She did communicate with some of the people who were  
24 waiting to get into their houses to get medicine. That was on  
25 Chief Clumpner, so I really didn't get involved with that or was

1 out there. I checked with Chief Clumpner a few times, see if he  
2 needed anything. He had it under control.

3 Q. Okay. So this Atmos rep that was going around asking if you  
4 needed anything, what time around that time -- what time was --

5 A. She was there when I first showed up at 1700. I would say I  
6 did not see her after 11:00 or so, so --

7 Q. This is the same one handling the accommodations?

8 A. Yes. Yeah. Oh no, a different one.

9 Q. Different one. Okay.

10 A. So we had somebody to help with -- helping us with language  
11 barriers or anything like that. In fact she came to me, I would  
12 say, close to 11:00. She was trading out with somebody else, and  
13 she introduced me to the new person, a gentleman, and said that  
14 she was going home. And I'd say 11:00, but after 11, I didn't  
15 make any contact with either one of them.

16 Q. Okay. Did you see him?

17 A. I did. He brought -- she brought him to my command post. I  
18 talked with him for a little bit and just told him -- you know,  
19 kind of felt -- just said, hey, where are you going to be? In  
20 case we need you, where are you going to be? And he told me he  
21 would be in the command post with Atmos.

22 And didn't have a need for him. Nothing came up. When I was  
23 relieved, I did pass that on to the next incident commander; he's  
24 over, if you need him, just go over and --

25 Q. Do you remember his name, by any chance? The Atmos rep?



1 A. I do not.

2 Q. Okay. But you said he was a man?

3 A. Yes. Hispanic gentleman.

4 Q. Okay. And after you met him, did he ever come back to check  
5 or --

6 A. No.

7 Q. -- update -- okay.

8 A. Nothing after that. And I was trying to -- I don't have the  
9 name listed. I had contact information here, but I don't have the  
10 names listed of who was the translator, so I don't know the  
11 initial person's.

12 Q. Okay. What interactions did you have with Atmos overnight?

13 A. Overnight I had one person, who appeared to be a field  
14 personnel, he was, I assumed, a supervisor who came to me with a  
15 map. Actually the map was on his phone, and that was some of the  
16 confusion. So he brings a phone to me and he goes, you guys did  
17 not -- you guys haven't evacuated the area we needed evacuated.  
18 So, of course, first thing I'm thinking, well, that's a problem.  
19 I mean, I'm working with a small crew here, now I need to call for  
20 people. So my driver called for four more apparatus to come out.

21 And he kept trying to show me on his phone, and it just  
22 wasn't a very clear -- it was kind of like, okay, I'm not -- so we  
23 had a map set up in the command post. Or no, we had a hand-drawn  
24 map on a dry-erase board, which is, you know, not to scale or  
25 anything, and who knows if it -- anything's missing. But I'm

1 trying to show him on the map we've had drawn. And he -- and then  
2 he goes to the south of Bolivar and to the west of Marsh. So we  
3 went to the east of Marsh to evacuate. And he said, yeah, that's  
4 good, we need to do that; but down here in this area, I also need  
5 evacuated, which led to us creating kind of a Division 3 at that  
6 point.

7 Q. Got it.

8 A. But as far as -- that was my first contact. The second one  
9 was in discussing the apartments. Another gentleman from the  
10 command post, Atmos command post, a different person came over and  
11 we were discussing that.

12 Q. The actual evacuation of the apartment?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Which did not --

15 A. Which did not happen.

16 Q. -- happen.

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. Did he explain why?

19 A. He said that all the gas -- there was no gas in the area.  
20 The gas had actually been shut off and the lines had been purged,  
21 so there was no gas in the area, or no concern. The fact was that  
22 they just didn't have gas. They don't have gas. And it was a  
23 cool night, but it wasn't what I would call a cold night. So we  
24 kind of made the decision, hey, let's handle this as we would with  
25 a normal outage. Let's just, you know -- I didn't want to go door

1 to door at midnight waking people up and all that, but let's just  
2 basically call -- contact the apartment manager. And they had  
3 made contact with him; that's what he told me, made contact with  
4 people at the apartment and basically told them the gas is out.  
5 And my understanding was that was a face-to-face communication  
6 with the field personnel from Atmos.

7 Q. So when you say no gas in the apartment, they shut off  
8 service or --

9 A. Shut off service. Shut off service completely because they  
10 were going to have to inspect and do some repairs, from my  
11 understanding.

12 Q. Did they discuss gas readings in the apartment at all?

13 A. No. No.

14 Q. Okay. So then that was your second contact with Atmos.

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Any others?

17 A. Other than that, and then the young lady who was handling  
18 hotels --

19 Q. Go ahead.

20 A. So the young lady who was in the command post with me was my  
21 only other communication after that point.

22 But with the gentleman I was discussing the apartments with,  
23 that third area, I made two or three -- he made two or three trips  
24 to our command post to discuss that. So it was kind of like, hey,  
25 we may have to do this, we're looking into it still; I'll get back

1 with you.

2 Thirty minutes later, he comes back in and he explains the  
3 situation to me; this is what we have, and that he felt  
4 comfortable with not evacuating. But then he said, well, let me  
5 see if we're going to be able to get a CNG machine in there. He  
6 said that's probably going to be in the morning anyway, so let me  
7 look into that. And then he came back later and he said, I'm not  
8 sure if we can or not, but I'm still comfortable with not  
9 evacuating the apartments.

10 Q. Okay. And he was a different person. He was a service tech?

11 A. He was, I assume, somebody that is actually kind of a  
12 decision maker for Atmos. He was in the command post.

13 Q. (Indiscernible).

14 A. Right. He was not a field personnel. He had been there all  
15 day, but I don't recall his name.

16 Q. Do you remember his -- was he white?

17 A. White gentleman, tall; thin hair.

18 Q. Okay. Oh, you didn't get his name. Okay. All right.

19 And so that was the last -- after the apartment discussion,  
20 that was the last --

21 A. That was it. So that -- all the discussions I'd had with  
22 him.

23 Q. Okay. Did you try to reach out to Atmos after that?

24 A. When I was relieved at the command post, I took Chief Clower,  
25 who was my relief battalion chief, I took him to the Atmos command

1 post and introduced him to everybody. And then followed up at  
2 that point, hey, is there anything else going on? And they were  
3 all like, no, we're good; nothing's changed. And that was  
4 probably a 2-hour window since I had -- well not 2 hours. It was  
5 probably an hour window since I had talked to him last. So when I  
6 introduced him, it was kind of like, hey, he's going to be in  
7 charge now; if you need anything, let him know.

8 Q. Okay. Okay, you went -- okay, so you went to -- and so there  
9 were no updates from Atmos?

10 A. Not after -- I would say I got relieved at 2 in the morning.  
11 So nothing after 1:00 or so.

12 Q. Okay. Okay. All right. So what did you do after you got  
13 relieved?

14 A. After I got relieved, I took Chief Clower over to the Atmos  
15 command area. We came back to our command post and we kind of  
16 followed up. I gave him a rundown of what had happened throughout  
17 the day; this is what happened throughout the day, this is what  
18 they did about it. It's just kind of a standard for a change of  
19 command for us. Wanted to make sure he understood where  
20 everything was. We kind of had a discussion about the fuel for  
21 the command van that we were in that kind of -- how to make sure  
22 it has fuel and doesn't run out. And then what to do if certain  
23 things came up and --

24 Q. Such as?

25 A. Such as, you know, if there's another area that needs to be

1 evacuated. I gave him the idea about, you know, if there's  
2 apartments in that area, that's manpower-intensive deal, you're  
3 going to have to call for lots of people. And didn't anticipate  
4 it, because it's 2 in the morning and I think everybody's just  
5 kind of either slowing down or -- and then everybody was down for  
6 the night. So I kind of turned it over to him and said, hey, if  
7 you need anything, give me a call, which is kind of standard for  
8 what we do. So then he took it over and we went back to the  
9 station.

10 Q. Okay. And you went back to your station?

11 A. Went back to Battalion 4, which is at Station 28.

12 Q. Got it. And then was your shift over?

13 A. No. I was there -- in fact, we got a high-rise fire about  
14 4:00 that morning. So we had a high-rise fire about 4 that  
15 morning up in North Dallas, so --

16 Q. Oh, okay. Was it gas related?

17 A. No. It was actually, I think, a burned-up air conditioning  
18 motor.

19 Q. You responded to that one directly?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Okay. And then after that, what happened?

22 A. The next morning -- I believe that's the last run I made, and  
23 got up the next morning and went home.

24 Q. Okay. That's --

25 A. It was a rough 48 hours.

1 Q. Yeah. So in the time that you were serving, you said you  
2 spoke -- going back to the apartments, and you were talking to  
3 Atmos about what was going on and what to do and so forth, and  
4 that closed off. And I think that was probably, sounds like it  
5 was around -- was it after midnight when that happened or --

6 A. It was, to the best that I remember, it was just prior to  
7 midnight. Yeah, because we had made that decision -- and I can't  
8 recall when I released companies. So I have two engine companies  
9 that are dedicated -- in fact, I know it was before midnight, now  
10 that I think about it. It may have been closer to 10:30 or 11.

11 I have two engine companies whose very distinct  
12 responsibility was to transport citizens. That's their job.  
13 They're not doing anything else. So then I had to call for four  
14 more companies just in case we had to evacuate that area. So I  
15 would say I released those additional four companies prior to  
16 midnight. Sent them back home and just kept, kind of kept two,  
17 the bare minimum, there.

18 Q. Okay. So, and you got relieved at 2 a.m. So in that 2-hour  
19 period, was there any updates from Atmos?

20 A. Not that I recall.

21 Q. Did you try to go over there at all, or were you trying to --

22 A. When I took the -- the incident commander was taking over for  
23 me, I believe from midnight to 2:00, that was the only time that I  
24 went over there.

25 Q. Okay. Yeah. Okay. So were -- when you were working that

1 shift that night, was it clear as to your role with Atmos and so  
2 forth?

3 A. I felt like it -- the way that I looked at it or the way it  
4 appeared to me was that Atmos was -- that this was an Atmos  
5 incident and we were assisting Atmos in this incident. Whatever  
6 they needed from us, they would come and ask, and we would take  
7 care of it. For instance, if we needed a certain block evacuated,  
8 they would come to us and say, hey, we need this block evacuated;  
9 here's the perimeters. And then we would send fire crews out to  
10 evacuate that block.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. So I understood that that was kind of how things were working  
13 and how it had been working for some of the day. Not the whole  
14 day. Of course the initial incident was a fire department  
15 incident. But after, I think, things got moving, that's kind of  
16 how we worked it, so --

17 Q. Okay. So they were in the lead from what time to what time?  
18 Atmos.

19 A. I would have -- I would not be able to guess prior to my  
20 arrival. That was just my understanding from when I showed up at  
21 1800 to when I was relieved, that that was kind of -- we were  
22 working together, but they were kind of dictating what got  
23 evacuated, you know, what was happening within that area.  
24 Especially since everybody was out and now we have no people to  
25 worry about in that area. So anything that's happening, they



1 would have to communicate to us and we would talk about taking  
2 care of it.

3 Q. So what impression did you get as far as before you arrived,  
4 you were talking with Chief Combs -- Captain Combs, regarding  
5 -- was that more of a fire department was in the lead in the  
6 beginning?

7 A. Yeah, first thing in the morning, I know for sure that they  
8 were in the lead, when it dealt with the incident on Espanola. So  
9 anything that had to do with that initial incident was a fire  
10 department -- I mean, they were in the lead because of the  
11 incident itself. It could have been a fire or, you know,  
12 whatever's going on, we're going to take care of the initial part  
13 of it.

14 And then it kind of, once they started -- speaking to Captain  
15 Combs, once they started the idea of evacuating a large number of  
16 homes, then the command post was set up remote from the Espanola  
17 incident. And then, you know, anybody that is considered  
18 necessary -- in this case, Atmos, absolutely necessary -- anybody  
19 who is necessary was set up with us in the command post or close  
20 to the command post, and we would all kind of work together from  
21 that point on.

22 Q. Do you know when the command post was moved to -- okay.

23 A. No idea.

24 Q. Okay. Okay. So is that -- so that kind of interaction with  
25 Atmos, is that typical? Like have you responded with --

1 A. This type of interaction -- we rarely interact with anybody  
2 besides field personnel, people who show up to do repairs. Our  
3 level of interaction usually stops there, because we do what we  
4 can to stop a leak if it's within our training; if it's not, we  
5 have to wait for somebody from Atmos to get there and then they  
6 handle the repairs. That's usually the limit of what we do.

7 Q. Okay. And have you ever had to work with Atmos on a bigger  
8 incident?

9 A. This is first one for me.

10 Q. Okay. Have you heard of any other bigger incidents in the  
11 past?

12 A. Not that I recall.

13 Q. Have you ever done any drills with Atmos?

14 A. No. Not personally I haven't.

15 Q. Do you know of drills that in the past have occurred?

16 A. It seems like I remember maybe some training with our hazmat  
17 team. I recall some very specific training with the hazmat team  
18 and the Atmos people, but I've never been involved nor have I  
19 directly witnessed that training.

20 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. All right. I will go ahead and turn  
21 it over to my right.

22 MR. CHEVEREZ: Jose Cheverez, Railroad Commission of Texas.

23 BY MR. CHEVEREZ:

24 Q. A couple quick questions that I missed earlier. Chief  
25 Clumpner and Captain Combs, what stations are they from?

1 A. Captain Combs is the captain at Station 43, C shift. And  
2 Chief Clumpner is battalion chief Battalion 9, C shift. So they  
3 were both on their respective shifts. C shift was the day we were  
4 talking about.

5 Q. Okay. When you took over as incident commander, there was  
6 Chief Clumpner and Captain Combs; one was incident commander, one  
7 was safety officer.

8 A. Correct.

9 Q. Did you take both roles at that point?

10 A. No, I did not. I took over the overall incident commander  
11 role from Captain Combs. The way it typically -- it's just a  
12 matter of response. So first chief there is the incident  
13 commander; he's in charge of everything. Second chief there is  
14 the safety officer. So I took over from Captain Combs as the  
15 incident commander.

16 And then Captain Clumpner -- or Chief Clumpner stayed there  
17 to assist me but also retaining that role of safety office. So he  
18 stayed till approximately close to midnight. I had actually asked  
19 him to go home -- or asked him to go to the station, get relieved  
20 a couple times and he was like, no, I'm good. He was embedded, I  
21 believe. So he was good and had an understanding of everything  
22 that was going on, so he wanted to stay.

23 Q. So who took over safety officer when Chief Clumpner left?

24 A. So once an incident deescalates to a smaller incident, the  
25 incident commander can actually --

1 Q. Just take both roles at that point. Okay.

2 A. -- assume both roles, which I did. So --

3 MR. CHEVEREZ: Okay. Thank you.

4 MR. MEADOR: Thank you.

5 MR. MURDOCK: Phillip Murdock, Atmos Energy.

6 BY MR. MURDOCK:

7 Q. You mentioned, at 2100 hours, an Atmos rep came and discussed  
8 the three apartment complexes and more homes?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Division 3? And you kind of -- you described that as, I  
11 don't know, the Atmos rep didn't have a lot of information. Could  
12 you kind of describe that interaction just a little more?

13 A. Basically, and I believe -- the first contact I made, which I  
14 believe was close to 2100 hours, was what appeared to be a field  
15 rep, somebody that was in the field. He walked up with a vest on,  
16 a reflective vest on. A black gentleman. And he said, hey, we  
17 didn't evacuate -- we need to evacuate a bigger area, more, you  
18 know, kind of -- he gave me the impression that he passed on to  
19 Captain Combs and Chief Clumpner earlier that this was the area he  
20 wanted and it didn't get taken care of. That's the impression he  
21 gave me. So he came to me and said, hey, we need to evacuate this  
22 area now.

23 And so I pull it up on the map, get an aerial view of it to  
24 kind of get an idea of what kind of homes we're talking about. It  
25 was pretty obvious that we had apartment complexes in there, which

1 was a big issue for me because it's easier -- I can tell somebody  
2 to get out of their home, but an apartment complex, that gets very  
3 complicated. So I said okay. So we kind of got an idea of the  
4 area. The first thing I did was assign an engine company to start  
5 with the residential homes, single-family.

6 A little while later, we hadn't -- I had -- I would say  
7 probably 30 minutes later, I had a different gentleman from the  
8 command post, Atmos command post, come over to our command post  
9 and said, hey, let's discuss this area. And I explained to him,  
10 I've already got people evacuating from homes; I would like to  
11 continue that because I've already asked people to leave, and when  
12 you get into the whole, okay, that person had to leave, but now I  
13 don't have to leave, that gets clouded, I guess. So I didn't want  
14 to -- the single-family homes, I said, let's just continue. We've  
15 got those evacuated for the most part, let's just stay with that.  
16 And he said, okay, I'm good with that. He said, but the  
17 apartments, let's hold off on the apartments. I'm going to say  
18 that discussion took place somewhere close to 10:00.

19 So field rep came in first and told me, hey, we didn't do the  
20 right thing. Then the person from the Atmos command post came in  
21 and said, hey, this is what I'm thinking.

22 Q. So the Atmos rep that came in, in the safety vest that you  
23 termed as a field guy, he said or implied that Dallas Fire and  
24 Rescue didn't do the right thing?

25 A. He implied that we didn't -- that there was some -- a

1 communication issue, that we didn't understand what -- the area  
2 that they wanted evacuated. And I said, well, let's talk about  
3 it. And that's when he started showing me the map on his phone,  
4 which was hard because it's on a phone.

5 Q. Absolutely.

6 A. So I had him actually send it to my iPad, which gave me a  
7 little bigger screen. So now I can see it on my iPad and we just  
8 kind of -- once we did that, there was still some confusion about  
9 what we needed to evacuate, so I walked with him from our command  
10 post to the Atmos command post, where they had a big map, actual  
11 map up, and had him show me. Show me direct -- you know, I want  
12 -- I need you to show me where that's it. And once he did, we  
13 were clear on and we took care of it.

14 Q. Is it a normal Dallas Fire and Rescue procedure that in these  
15 types of instances, that you would -- it's understood that you  
16 take the lead from Atmos or from the gas company about needing to  
17 evacuate homes if gas is involved?

18 A. If it would -- initially, as we're called to the incident and  
19 it was something that was -- involved natural gas, in this case,  
20 that -- if it was something where an explosion or a fire or  
21 something like that, that of course we take the lead on, the  
22 initial part. And evacuating homes, yes, we would take the lead  
23 on evacuating homes, but we would have to get information from  
24 somebody as to what homes do we evacuate. So that's -- just to  
25 clarify, that's basically how that would work.

1 Q. So that would be if you -- if the Dallas Fire and Rescue  
2 decides to evacuate homes. So if Atmos Energy makes that  
3 decision, do you kind of follow their -- follow Atmos's lead --

4 A. Correct.

5 Q. -- as to the extent of the area to be evacuated?

6 A. Yes. Because we have no idea of -- other than the issue  
7 directly in front of us, other than that house right there that  
8 something obviously happened at, or the two houses on each side of  
9 it, which would kind of be standard for us. If we had an issue  
10 such as a gas leak in one house, we would check the houses next  
11 door, regardless, you know, if -- if we have that issue, we just  
12 want to make sure that it's not -- that it doesn't extend out to  
13 the houses next door. So we'll do that.

14 But in order to evacuate an entire area this size, that would  
15 have to be dictated by Atmos. They would have to say, this is how  
16 it's affected -- I mean, this is the area that's affected by it.  
17 Because we have no way of knowing.

18 MR. MURDOCK: Okay, thank you. That's all I have.

19 MR. JONES: Yes, this is Michael Jones with PHMSA. Just a  
20 couple clarifying points here.

21 BY MR. JONES:

22 Q. You mentioned -- as you were going over the skeleton crew and  
23 sort of bringing -- deescalating, you mentioned a term that I  
24 wasn't familiar with. Something fence?

25 A. Oh, we were talking -- that dealt with dispatching -- my

1 understanding -- this is to the best of my understanding.

2 Q. Okay. Yeah.

3 A. And I've dealt with this a few times. When you have an area  
4 that it's -- that's affected by whatever -- for example, to get  
5 away from this and explain in a different sense, when we had riots  
6 downtown, we had riots downtown and we had an affective area, we  
7 give our dispatch a perimeter. We tell them, this is the  
8 perimeter. Basically that -- they do something within the  
9 software of the dispatching software. It's called geofencing.  
10 And what it does, it puts a fence, per se, around that area. And  
11 in that software, if they get a run in that area, they don't  
12 automatically dispatch somebody in that area. For example, with  
13 the riots and stuff, that's a dangerous situation, and we don't  
14 automatically dispatch somebody into that area. My understanding  
15 is this is what we did here.

16 So when -- if a run or an issue came up in the area that's  
17 geofenced off, they call us and they say, hey, we're getting a  
18 call saying -- for example, we're getting a call from the person  
19 who is bedridden on Cortez that we're evacuating. They've called  
20 us and said that she can't evacuate her husband; he's bedridden.  
21 Command post calls us. That's our issue now. We deal with that.  
22 Basically receive -- I've got it, I'll take care of it.

23 So that's, in short, how that all works.

24 Q. Cool. And then the exact location of the command post you  
25 all were at at this time I have as Chapel and Larga. There was



1 also another --

2 A. Webb Chapel.

3 Q. Webb Chapel.

4 A. I mean, if -- basically we were right on the corner of Webb  
5 Chapel and Storey.

6 Q. Storey. So that was the other one.

7 A. The apparatus -- as apparatus showed up to the command post,  
8 I had them go park on Storey, which was basically walk across a  
9 flowerbed to the command post.

10 Q. Right. And then -- so last one. As we were discussing sort  
11 of roles between you and Atmos, and you guys sort of playing  
12 support, you sort of walked us through a typical scenario that you  
13 would interact with the field techs.

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. And you mentioned, to the best of your ability, you would  
16 mitigate leaks as you could yourselves.

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. What are you usually able to do on that front?

19 A. Essentially that -- essentially our level of control there is  
20 shutting off the supply to the house. So we'll go outside and  
21 turn it off at the meter. And that -- as far as plugging pipes or  
22 trying to repair pipes, we stay away from that.

23 Q. Right. Okay, and --

24 A. We shut it off at the meter, and that typically involves a  
25 leak inside a home. So --

1 Q. As you're familiar with it, you won't be involved with main  
2 line meters or main line valves?

3 A. No. Typically not. We're going to focus basically on  
4 residential supply into a house or an apartment complex and shut  
5 it off. Just shut off the supply to the building.

6 Q. Do you have any training for that, in general?

7 A. Not in general, no. I've never been trained or anything.

8 Q. Sort of a practical application?

9 A. Very practical application.

10 Q. Okay. Got you. And then any other gas-related training you  
11 all might have?

12 A. Not that I recall. I mean, not -- like I said, typically  
13 that involves a hazmat team, and we're talking big-scale stuff.  
14 But nothing that I've been directly involved with that I recall.

15 MR. JONES: Okay. That's it for me.

16 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

17 Q. So going back to your shift, were you aware of the work that  
18 Atmos was doing?

19 A. Yes. I was aware that there were issues with what appeared  
20 to be gas issues in that area, because the shift prior to me  
21 coming to work, I knew they had a fire and I had heard that it was  
22 gas-related. The day that I was working -- I was not involved in  
23 the incident, but they had a house next door to the A shift fire  
24 -- so I'm working B shift. The house next door was well involved  
25 when they showed up. And then that next morning, which was C

1 shift morning, we had the Espanola incident.

2 Q. And what did you understand of the activity Atmos was doing?

3 What was --

4 A. My assumption -- I could only make an assumption that they  
5 were doing repairs.

6 Q. Oh, okay.

7 A. That they had found something, they were doing repairs.

8 Q. And they were doing repairs at what time, you think?

9 A. That's just -- I don't have a time relative to it. It's  
10 just --

11 Q. But this was prior to the explosion?

12 A. Yes. Yeah.

13 Q. Did you know what they were doing as you were incident  
14 commander, during that time period?

15 A. Same thing. My understanding was that they had this area and  
16 that they were either testing or repairing lines in that area,  
17 so --

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. And I do distinctly remember -- going back to the Espanola  
20 incident, that -- looking at -- we have a -- not to cloud this,  
21 but we have a system called VisiNet. Basically it's run  
22 information. And I remember pulling up that VisiNet run while I  
23 was listening to the scanner, which is not unusual. I'll pull it  
24 up, kind of see who's there and what they're doing. I do remember  
25 it saying Atmos is on location. So --

1 Q. When you were incident commander did -- were they -- you  
2 understood that they were doing repairs and testing and so forth.  
3 Did you understand exact locations of where they were doing this?

4 A. I did not. Within the area. Within that area that we had  
5 evacuated.

6 Q. Okay. And do you need that information? Does it --

7 A. I don't need -- in this case, I don't, because everybody's  
8 evacuated, everybody's out. There is no danger presented to  
9 citizens directly due to life-threatening stuff, is what I'm  
10 talking about. Now their homes and everything, I understand.

11 I don't need to know that they're digging up a line at this  
12 corner as long as this area is evacuated. So if I know that  
13 they're -- so my understanding was, when I show up, there may have  
14 been 10 places where they were working on lines in here, which  
15 would just mean they're digging up a lot of gas lines, to us.  
16 So --

17 Q. So where did you understand -- in what area did you know of  
18 that they were doing these repairs?

19 A. That I knew of directly --

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. -- was off of Marsh and -- as we're driving in -- so we come  
22 in from the northeast side. We're coming down. We turn on to  
23 Marsh and we're coming down Marsh. And I remember seeing the  
24 lights, the lights from the repair vehicles flashing on the side  
25 of the road, and it's kind of like, oh, this is our area. Along

1 with police units and barricades that were set up going down  
2 Marsh. As we're going down, every road's got barricades or a  
3 police unit at it.

4 So we're going down through there, and I remember very --  
5 that I witnessed myself two areas where the ground had obviously  
6 been dug up and people were working. Those were the two areas  
7 that I know of directly.

8 Q. And your understanding while you -- during the period you  
9 were incident commander, they were working in what -- besides  
10 Marsh, that you saw directly, you understood they're working  
11 anywhere else?

12 A. My assumption -- and I don't recall if I was directly told,  
13 hey, they're digging here, digging here, digging here. I don't  
14 believe I was directly ever told that. But my assumption was that  
15 they were working in several areas within that. Just off the  
16 sheer size of the evacuation area, it was -- my understanding was,  
17 if you evacuate an area of that size, that there's a lot of  
18 repairs going on.

19 Q. Going on.

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. Okay. So your concern was only of which area exactly?

22 A. My concern of -- I mean, I say concern. I kind of felt like  
23 we had control of the situation at this point when I took it over.  
24 We have control of the situation. I didn't have really a distinct  
25 concern about what was going on. I just wanted to remain

1 consistent with what we were doing.

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. So I didn't want to, I didn't want -- let's say, for example,  
4 Division 3, when we moved into that area, I didn't want the  
5 citizens to think that we thought any less of their safety than  
6 anybody else's. So I tried to remain consistent of evacuating  
7 everything.

8 Speaking with Atmos, talking to everybody, it seemed like the  
9 area had been shut off, no gas in the area, that the supply was  
10 under control. So I didn't have a concern. It was just, at this  
11 point we're waiting to see, and if something happened, we would  
12 have to react. But I had everything in place to do that.

13 Q. So at the point you were just essentially reacting to  
14 whatever Atmos would --

15 A. Correct.

16 Q. Right. Okay. So Atmos was leading you in that sense to,  
17 okay, this is what we need?

18 A. Yes. They would provide us with the information and we would  
19 come up with the plan to evacuate, which was our role at that  
20 point.

21 Q. Right. And that's -- that was acceptable?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Yeah. Okay.

24 MS. GUNARATNAM: Any other follow-up?

25 MR. CHEVEREZ: Not at the moment.

1 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. All right.

2 MR. MURDOCK: Phillip Murdock, Atmos Energy.

3 BY MR. MURDOCK:

4 Q. So when you came on at, you said, about 1730, 1745, 1800 --

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. -- and during your debrief with the chief and the captain,  
7 was it your understanding that this area, Division 1, had been  
8 evacuated?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. And the gas had been shut off?

11 A. It was my understanding that the area had been evacuated. I  
12 don't believe it was ever communicated to me that the gas had been  
13 shut off. The area had been evacuated, but that Atmos was doing  
14 repairs into that area. So as far as the -- I would say that I  
15 have limited knowledge and understanding. Can Atmos actually shut  
16 the gas off to a whole area of this size? I don't know. I don't  
17 know if they can, but I knew they were doing repairs and I knew  
18 that everybody to the best of our knowledge had been evacuated.  
19 So --

20 Q. So I don't want to boil this down to a short statement, so  
21 please correct me if I'm wrong. I'm kind of -- kind of sense that  
22 you were there kind of twofold on Friday evening. One was to  
23 assist with evacuations, and the second area was to escort  
24 residents back into these areas to get --

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. -- medicine, pets, things they needed; is that correct?

2 A. Yes, sir. That's a correct statement.

3 Q. Okay, those were your two primary areas of focus?

4 A. Correct. Yes, sir.

5 MR. MURDOCK: Okay. Thank you.

6 MR. MEADOR: Um-hum.

7 MR. CHEVEREZ: Jose Cheverez, Railroad Commission.

8 BY MR. CHEVEREZ:

9 Q. To clarify, the VisiNet, where you were looking up the  
10 previous house fire, is that part of your normal duties, to look  
11 up --

12 A. It is a software program we have on our station computers,  
13 where basically dispatch receives information, and they type this  
14 information into the run sheet. And essentially VisiNet is the  
15 run sheet. So if I want to see who's all assigned to this  
16 incident, I can look on VisiNet and see who is assigned.

17 If I want to see notes, like they say -- you know, typically  
18 on a house fire for us, it'll say, you know, house next door.  
19 Typically when something says house next door, that concerns us.  
20 Or it would say, people still inside or -- on VisiNet, that is the  
21 run sheet. Now it can get really long and convoluted because it's  
22 everything. It's when an engine hits in or out. It's when an  
23 engine hits the on-scene button. It marks everything. And that's  
24 just a software program that we have access to, just to be able to  
25 see what's going on.



1 Q. So if you can't -- can you explain how you put the two  
2 together as to -- because you looked up the second -- the previous  
3 fire --

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. -- already knowing about it. So how did you get that initial  
6 knowledge to say, hey, wait a minute; this is in the same area?

7 A. Just knowing that area. I used to work up here, and I was --

8 Q. Just from proximity.

9 A. Yeah. And in fact, I was -- right down the street here was  
10 my station. I used to work in this area. I'm aware of it. It's  
11 part of what we do. We know our -- what we call our divisions.  
12 So just knowing. When I heard, hey, two fires there and then the  
13 run on Espanola, I was like, they're all in the same area. I know  
14 it's, you know, geographically it's the same area.

15 Q. Okay. Two more follow-ups. So you're -- you did a 48-hour  
16 shift. You came into the incident around 35 -- 34, 35 hours, and  
17 you worked until about 43 --

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. -- hours; 42, 43 hours. Is a 48-hour shift normal or is  
20 that --

21 A. It is normal, yeah. It's normal because if you -- we work  
22 -- if you work -- a typical -- a shift for us is 24 hours. If you  
23 work overtime, it's dictated by how long they need you. So we  
24 have a mandatory staffing model. Every apparatus in the city has  
25 four people on it; every chief's car two; every ambulance two. So

1 it just depends on -- in order to maintain that staffing model,  
2 they have to have people work overtime. So to answer your  
3 question in short, it's not unusual for me to work 48 hours.

4 Q. Okay. And then the last question was -- Division 1 and  
5 Division 2 for the evacuations.

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Do you know how those were originally received?

8 A. I do not. My assumption or -- I'm not going to make an  
9 assumption. I don't, I don't know how they were received. When I  
10 showed up at 1800 to take over, those evacuations had either taken  
11 place or were taking place already. So Division 1, which is the  
12 main area, had been taken care of. It was finished. Division 2  
13 was in process of doing a secondary evacuation, which is basically  
14 go back through with a different crew to make sure every house was  
15 covered.

16 Q. So then Chief Clumpner and Captain Combs were the first two  
17 incident commander and safety officer, so --

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. -- they would have received those two?

20 A. Correct.

21 MR. CHEVEREZ: Okay. That's it for me. Thank you.

22 MR. JONES: It's Michael Jones. PHMSA.

23 BY MR. JONES:

24 Q. So jumping back to when you first saw the run come up for the  
25 23rd event, you mentioned you were familiar with -- you'd been on

1 the 22nd. Were -- you were also aware of the event on the 21st?

2 A. I was not aware of the event on the 21st until we started  
3 talking around the station that they had had a fire there. And  
4 they were like, oh yeah, we had a fire there yesterday too.

5 Q. Okay. So you were made aware of the 21st and the 22nd at the  
6 same time?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Got it.

9 A. Well, actually I was on the air when the run on the 22nd came  
10 in, which would have been my -- and I heard them on the radio. So  
11 I heard the size-up on the radio, quite a bit of fire and what  
12 they were doing. So --

13 Q. And then that's when you all started discussing, oh, that's  
14 the same area --

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. -- as the 21st? Okay.

17 A. Or somebody said, hey, they had a fire there yesterday. And  
18 I guess started looking and says, actually the house next door.

19 Q. Right.

20 A. So --

21 Q. And to the best of your ability -- and so I'll start and make  
22 sure I have it right in my notes here first. The Espanola fire,  
23 the 23rd, was an A shift fire?

24 A. C shift.

25 Q. C shift.

1 A. C shift.

2 Q. Okay. The one on the 22nd -- yeah, Espanola, C shift. Got  
3 it.

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. The one on the 22nd was an A shift?

6 A. The 22nd, which would be the day I -- it was a B shift.

7 Q. B shift. Okay. And that's you?

8 A. That's me.

9 Q. That's you.

10 A. I'm B shift. Yes.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. So the 21st was the first fire, which was A shift. The 22nd  
13 was the fire I was working on, on B shift, and then the 23rd was  
14 the Espanola incident.

15 MR. JONES: Okay. Great. And that's everything I was  
16 looking to get clarified.

17 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

18 Q. Just to follow up on that one, can you define the shifts, A,  
19 B, C?

20 A. Yeah, we work three shifts and -- we have operations  
21 division, which is basically field personnel at the fire station.  
22 We work 24-hour shifts. We have three shifts: A shift, B shift,  
23 C shift. So you work 1 day and you're off 2, then you come back  
24 to work on the fourth day, of course. So that's how our shifts  
25 are set up.

1 MS. GUNARATNAM: Oh okay. Got it. All right.  
2 That's all I have for now. Does anybody -- yeah?

3 BY MR. CHEVEREZ:

4 Q. The shifts, what, they transfer every day at 7 a.m.?

5 A. Yes. 0700 every morning.

6 MR. CHEVEREZ: Okay.

7 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Okay. Phil?

8 MR. MURDOCK: I'm good. Thank you.

9 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Good? Okay. All right. Thank you  
10 so much --

11 MR. MEADOR: All right. Thank you all.

12 MS. GUNARATNAM: -- for coming in last-minute notice.

13 MR. MEADOR: Absolutely. Glad I could make it.

14 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yeah.

15 (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-FUELED EXPLOSION OF  
RESIDENCE, DALLAS, TEXAS  
FEBRUARY 23, 2018  
Interview of Michael Meador

ACCIDENT NO.:               PLD18FR002

PLACE:                       Dallas, Texas

DATE:                         March 5, 2018

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

  
Eileen Gonzalez  
Transcriber