

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: \*

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NATURAL GAS-FUELED EXPLOSION OF \*

RESIDENCE, DALLAS, TEXAS \* Accident No.: PLD18FR002

FEBRUARY 23, 2018 \*

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Interview of: LAUREN JOHNSON

Walnut Hill Recreation Center  
Dallas, Texas

Tuesday,  
February 27, 2018

## APPEARANCES:

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I N T E R V I E W

(10:03 a.m.)

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2  
3 MS. GUNARATNAM: Good morning. My name is Rachael Gunaratnam  
4 and I'm an investigator with the National Transportation Safety  
5 Board. Today is February 27, 2018 and the time is 10:03 a.m. We  
6 are currently at the Walnut Hill Rec Center in Dallas, Texas. We  
7 are here to investigate the house explosion at Espanola Drive in  
8 Dallas on Friday, February 23rd, 2018.

9 In this interview we will be talking to Chief Johnson. I  
10 would first like to go around the room, and introduce yourselves,  
11 spell your name and title.

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

14 DR. JENNER: I'm Stephen Jenner, S-T-E-P-H-E-N, J-E-N-N-E-R,  
15 a human factors investigator with the NTSB.

16 MR. COLLINS: Jim Collins, J-I-M, C-O-L-L-I-N-S, regional  
17 manager for the Railroad Commission of Texas.

18 MR. CHEVEREZ: Jose Cheverez, pipeline inspector for the  
19 Railroad Commission of Texas. J-O-S-E, C-H-E-V-E-R-E-Z.

20 MR. PADGETT: Ted Padgett, Chief of Staff, Dallas Fire-  
21 Rescue. Ted, T-E-D, Padgett, P-A-D-G-E-T-T.

22 MS. COLLETTI: Alex Colletti, A-L-E-X, C-O-L-L-E-T-T-I, PHMSA  
23 accident investigation.

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

1 MS. JOHNSON: Lauren Johnson, Deputy Chief of Safety for  
2 Dallas Fire-Rescue. L-A-U-R-E-N, J-O-H-N-S-O-N.

3 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Thank you.

4 INTERVIEW OF LAUREN JOHNSON

5 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

6 Q. We'll start off with -- can you give us a background about  
7 your position and, you know, your training and how long you've  
8 been with the Dallas Fire-Rescue?

9 A. Sure. So I was hired in 1998. So almost 20 years, September  
10 of this year. I'm the deputy chief of safety, which is a new  
11 division that was created by our chief this summer, this past  
12 summer in May, probably. So I supervise several different areas.  
13 We have shift safety chiefs that work out of the fire station on a  
14 24-hour shift. They respond as the designated safety officer on  
15 multiple alarm incidents, and then they do accident and injury  
16 investigations that occur to our firefighters and any fire  
17 department members if they're working that day.

18 I also supervise our SCBA program, which is our breathing air  
19 program. And I also have our wellness/fitness program. So we  
20 have medical exams to examine the fitness of firefighters every  
21 year, and we have a physical fitness program to ensure the fitness  
22 of our firefighters every year. And then I also have a workers'  
23 comp division and our personal protective equipment division.

24 So it's a new division. It's kind of a combination of things  
25 that used to exist under separate heads, and we pulled them all

1 into one to focus on firefighter safety. The main mission is to  
2 prevent and reduce accidents and injuries to our firefighters.

3 As far as training, we have annual continuing education  
4 requirements that are required by the Texas Commission on Fire  
5 Protection. So I meet those every year. I obviously try to  
6 exceed them in several different areas. I've got some state  
7 certifications as a master firefighter, an aircraft rescue  
8 firefighter, a hazmat technician, a pump operator certificate,  
9 Fire Officer 2 and Instructor 2. I'm an Executive Fire Officer,  
10 which is a national certification through the U.S. Fire  
11 Administration. That's equivalent to a master's level education  
12 and research position. That's it. And there's --

13 Q. That's it. That's enough.

14 A. So lots of different papers.

15 Q. Thank you.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Get them all.

17 MS. JOHNSON: Had to get them all.

18 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

19 Q. Do you oversee anything with hazmat or --

20 A. No, they're a separate division. We do make sure that our  
21 safety officers are assigned on hazmat incidents, but really our  
22 safety officers, since they're not trained at a technician level  
23 -- coincidentally one of them is, but it's not required. So they  
24 go to oversee the overall safety of the incident, and then we  
25 would rely on the hazmat technician to provide a safety officer

1 for their hazmat team.

2 Q. Is there any hazmat awareness level required?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Okay. All right. So going back to what happened on Friday,  
5 on February 23rd, take us through the time you were first notified  
6 of the incident and, you know --

7 A. How about my --

8 Q. -- basically your actions. Yeah.

9 A. Sure. So I got the page on my phone, or it comes across as  
10 an email and a text, that just says there was a structure fire at  
11 that location. And after that -- I'm off on Fridays usually, and  
12 it just happened to be that I was not working that Friday. Most  
13 Fridays I am in the office, but I was actually off that day. So I  
14 saw the page that morning and kind of moved on throughout the day.  
15 It wasn't until later that afternoon -- the other thing is that  
16 our Internet's out at my house, so I didn't see -- I didn't have  
17 the news on. I just didn't have any interaction with media that  
18 day.

19 So I was leaving the library, actually, when Chief Stidham  
20 called me and said, hey, do you know what's been going on today?  
21 And I said no. I hadn't gotten any additional pages. It turns  
22 out that when they added companies to this incident, it's as a  
23 separate page, which was for an overhaul. And the only reason  
24 that makes a difference is that means that I'm not on the  
25 distribution list for an overhaul, so I didn't get these pages

1 that they're saying, hey, additional companies have been assigned,  
2 they're in a 4-hour rotation, we added these chiefs. I just  
3 didn't get that information.

4 So Chief Stidham called around 4 and caught me up on what was  
5 going on, and he said that Chief Williford was handling it for  
6 him. And Chief Williford is the deputy chief of staff that's  
7 under Chief Stidham. Chief Stidham was going out of town. At  
8 5:00 was when we were supposed to transition. I had the on-call  
9 chief position for the weekend. And really, the on-call chief  
10 position is meant to be a liaison person so that we keep the fire  
11 chief and then, you know, city council or kind of any big  
12 stakeholders that are involved in an incident updated. It's not  
13 my job to come and take command. It's really more just to keep  
14 communication open about what's going on.

15 So Chief Stidham was giving me an update. He said get in  
16 touch with Chief Williford and see what they need, and are you  
17 still good with me going out of town? I said sure. So I called  
18 Chief Williford and said, hey, do you all need anything; how's it  
19 going? And he kind of gave me an update on what was going on at  
20 that time. And I said, okay, you know, I've got the call; call me  
21 if you need anything.

22 So after that, Mark Combs, who was the initial incident  
23 commander, he called me or I called him to check in and kind of  
24 get an update on what was going on. And at that point, he was  
25 ready -- he had been at work -- it was almost 7:00, so he had been



1 at work for almost 12 hours and was going to transition to where  
2 he was going to move out of command and get relief to come in. So  
3 I asked who the relief was, and he told me that.

4 And then probably at about 9:30, I got an update from the  
5 incident commander who was there. Chief Clumpner, Battalion 9,  
6 was working with Battalion 4, who was Chief Meador. Chief  
7 Clumpner called me to say, hey, here's what we have going on. And  
8 I ended up sending an email to Chief Padgett, because that's my  
9 first level of kind of reporting to the fire chief, is to tell  
10 Chief Padgett here's an update.

11 And I think the update I sent was that, you know, Atmos is  
12 continuing to look for the leak and they think that it's related  
13 to the original -- when the original line was put in with that  
14 neighborhood, so as they continue to look for the extent of this  
15 leak, they may expose things that cause them to do an evacuation.  
16 And I think -- I can look back at the email, but I had a number of  
17 homes that were impacted by that evacuation Friday night.

18 And I sent that in an email to him and said, you all just  
19 call me if you need something. But at that time, because of the  
20 number of the evacuations they were going to do, incident command  
21 said that they had ordered, I think, up to eight engines and  
22 trucks. Before that, I think we were at a number of two or four.  
23 So they increased the number of help, apparatus that they had  
24 asked to come help them do the evacuations. And I said, you know,  
25 call me if you need anything and I'll check back in the morning.

1 I had also talked with the deputy chief who was at work that  
2 day for this area, Ray O'Dell, who is 806, just to get an update  
3 from him. We talked about what was going on. He told me that  
4 Mark Combs had it and was in control. So we moved on.

5 The only other involvement I had that night was that I sent  
6 some ICS forms to Battalion 7 and Mark Combs' address, so -- his  
7 email address, so that we could start logging kind of activities  
8 for the weekend, what was going on as far as making contact with  
9 residents. We knew that they were going to be helping residents  
10 get back and forth for medication and pets, and that way they  
11 could keep a log.

12 So phone calls kind of went through almost midnight that  
13 night. I had a question about if I could get on that overhaul  
14 page so that I would see when companies were added. Talked with  
15 our dispatch chief, and that didn't -- it just wasn't feasible, so  
16 the only way I was going to keep up with what companies were out  
17 at the incident was to call dispatch. That was probably the  
18 easiest.

19 So overnight, command didn't call me for any reason. I  
20 called -- I woke up the next morning and called the deputy chief,  
21 Chief O'Dell, who had signed up to work again that day. And I  
22 asked for an update, and the only issue he brought up was that  
23 earlier that morning, he said that the crews had told him that we  
24 had one woman that didn't want to leave. And so he was like, can  
25 you get me some help and figure out what to do? Because, of

1 course, our guys had gone to the police department, said, hey, you  
2 need to remove this lady, and the police officers correctly said,  
3 under what statute? And so I started trying to run down is there  
4 anything that we can do, other than a declaration from the mayor  
5 or the county judge, to make people leave if it's an unsafe area.

6 So I started -- I called Chief Padgett. I made some email  
7 requests and started working on that, found out who was in command  
8 at the fire at that time -- or at the fire -- at the incident at  
9 that time, and it was Battalion 4 Chief Velez. Got that update.  
10 Really found out that, if we did have people that didn't want to  
11 leave the evacuation zone, we just really needed to try to be more  
12 persuasive. I think that woman eventually left, and I was just  
13 going to come up with a plan, if we had more, let's document the  
14 address and really send some new people to talk to those  
15 residents, maybe our chaplain or somebody that could be  
16 convincing. Thankfully I wasn't notified of any more issues.

17 A little bit of time went by and Chief Padgett called because  
18 he had been given word, I guess, that Atmos had left the scene  
19 basically as far as being -- they weren't responding to phone  
20 calls, nobody was at the rec center, and that we had residents  
21 that weren't able to talk to Atmos to get vouchers or -- we found  
22 out -- they had been called vouchers the whole time, right, for a  
23 hotel, but it's not an actual voucher. It's Atmos making an  
24 arrangement with the hotel for the resident to go there. But we  
25 had been told that they were doing vouchers for hotels and then

1 gift cards, and that Atmos was nowhere to be found.

2 And so I called our command, which at that time I thought it  
3 was Battalion 4; turns out they had transitioned to Battalion 9,  
4 Chief Myers. I finally get a hold of him and I say, hey, I need  
5 you to put eyes on the rec center and tell me what's going on. I  
6 said, Chief Padgett's been told that Atmos is nowhere to be found.  
7 And he said, well, that's not true; I'm looking at the voucher  
8 lady right now. And I said, well, can I talk to her, please?

9 And so he hands the phone. He's at the command post at Webb  
10 Chapel and Larga at our fire department command center, and then  
11 Atmos -- it's the same place. They have a white trailer set up.  
12 And so he hands me to -- I can look up her name. It's Celina  
13 Cárdenas. And I say, hey, you know, we're being told that you  
14 guys are nowhere to be found; we also are getting complaints from  
15 residents that they don't have the hookup for the hotels and food,  
16 and we've got some issues. So I said, how can you help me? And  
17 she said, we're sending a team right now to the rec center to feed  
18 people and kind of be responsive to those residents. And I said,  
19 okay.

20 So I hang up with her. I ask Battalion 9 to send an engine  
21 company over here to see if Atmos is here to meet those residents,  
22 and then to just give me an idea of what's going on here at the  
23 rec center. And in the meantime, as soon as I get those  
24 instructions out, I decide I'm just going to come up here myself  
25 and find out what's going on and see what we need.

1           So I come here first, and I -- there isn't an engine company  
2 yet because the battalion chief had to order one to come here.  
3 And so I come here, and Atmos did have a receiving room set up and  
4 some pizza, and one family was there. And so I gave my number to  
5 the Atmos person and said, you know, let's talk here, and if you  
6 need something from us, please call me, and then I want to be able  
7 to get in touch with you to find out what's going on with  
8 residents here. So we exchanged numbers.

9           And what was interesting was there were two workers, Atmos  
10 workers, in that room and they said, we're just waiting to hear --  
11 at 2:00, they're going to give us a briefing because we think that  
12 they're going to lift the evacuation. And I had been told by my  
13 boss on Friday this thing is going through Monday; don't let  
14 companies leave, it's 24/7, keep two engine companies there this  
15 whole time. And so I thought, wow, okay.

16           And I said -- and I even told her, I said, I can't imagine  
17 that that's going to happen but I'll call you back. So shame on  
18 me. I leave, and I go to the command post next to get an update  
19 from Battalion 9. And what's going on at that point at the  
20 command post is there are still lots of families that probably,  
21 you know, left their homes Friday morning, came back Friday  
22 afternoon and realized that they couldn't get into their  
23 neighborhood. So they went and slept someplace else and then  
24 returned Saturday morning to start the process of, hey, can I go  
25 back to my house and pick up these essentials that I left without

1 Friday morning?

2 And so what we had there -- the other thing I forgot to  
3 mention was that it had started to rain Saturday morning, so our  
4 incident commander asked for a DART bus to come out there. We use  
5 those DART buses just to shelter firefighters, residents if the  
6 weather is hot, cold, rainy. So there was a DART bus there, and  
7 there was a line of residents waiting to be shuttled back and  
8 forth, you know, to get their essentials and then come back. And  
9 so the biggest issue we had at that time was kind of taking care  
10 of those residents, because we could only take a handful of people  
11 at a time and they were tired of waiting and had been out of their  
12 home now for over 24 hours.

13 So I kind of dealt with that, and then went and got an update  
14 from Atmos in their trailer and said, you know, I had a couple of  
15 things -- I mean, Chief Padgett was getting lots of phone calls  
16 from the mayor, city council needing updates. So I -- the first  
17 thing I did with Atmos was just get some contact information and  
18 find out, you know, if our city officials need to talk to you, who  
19 can they talk to? And got that information and was able to give  
20 him an update.

21 And then they said, you know, we've shut off the gas to this  
22 area, and they showed it to me. They had a perimeter, basically,  
23 in the streets that were involved and the interior up on their  
24 dry-erase board. And they said, we're ready -- or we'll be ready  
25 to have a press conference at 3, and after that, we're ready to

1 lift the evacuation and let people back in. But they won't have  
2 gas for up to 8 or 10 days, and so we will continue to provide the  
3 vouchers or continue to provide hotels for them through that time  
4 period.

5 So then we started working -- we had our PIO, we had Dallas  
6 Police Department, and our command -- and we just started working  
7 to help Atmos get ready for a press release. And so we asked our  
8 PIO to notify the media, hey, come here because Atmos has an  
9 announcement that they need to make.

10 So we just worked through that. And got to the press  
11 conference time, and it turned out to be about 3:30 before they  
12 did the press conference, but Atmos said, you know, we're lifting  
13 the restriction.

14 Part of the issue is that, you know, this area is very  
15 Spanish-speaking and not very much English-speaking. So we stayed  
16 around -- the plan was, if at 3:00 Atmos made the announcement,  
17 that the fire department would at least stay through 4 to make  
18 sure, okay, are these people able to get in their cars and return  
19 home without any issues, you know, without needing something? We  
20 kept the engine here at the rec center in case people thought they  
21 had to come here, kept them here till 4. And before they --  
22 before the engine company left here, I called them and said, you  
23 know, do you have any residents showing up there with needs? And  
24 nothing had happened here, so we closed this site down.

25 We stayed around and answered questions from residents at the

1 location at Webb Chapel and Larga, and everybody really dispersed  
2 at that point. So that was around 4:00 on Saturday.

3 That night, I got a phone call from Kyle Slaughter with Atmos  
4 to say, hey, the NTSB called and said that we're supposed to  
5 notify you that they're coming. I said, okay, do they need  
6 anything from me? Do I need to be at a meeting? Nothing. He  
7 said, no, we're just supposed to notify you. I said okay. So I,  
8 you know, notified my -- I notified Chief Padgett about that, and  
9 I said okay, and I said I was going to call and check in, in the  
10 morning to see if there were any needs.

11 So Sunday comes, and Captain Baker, our hazmat coordinator,  
12 calls me. And he says, I just got a call from the NTSB and they  
13 want to have an organizational briefing meeting to let us -- to  
14 talk to us just about what's going on. And I thought, wow, how  
15 did that happen? So I said, can I please have their contact  
16 information? And so I called Rachael and introduced myself,  
17 because I had spent all day Saturday really trying to consolidate  
18 everybody's communication down to just me, because there were so  
19 many different phone calls going to lots of different people and I  
20 really felt like the communication was disjointed.

21 So we got that straightened out. I said, hey, if you'll  
22 include me in your phone list and come through me, then I'll get  
23 you the people you need. And we planned on coming to a 3:00  
24 briefing at Station 35. And when I knew that that meeting was  
25 going to happen, I called for 806, who was the deputy chief of



1 this area that worked that day, and his name is Cameron Creager,  
2 and I said, will you meet me at 35's and can we use 35's, right,  
3 for this meeting? And he said yes. And so we notified 35, said  
4 we were going to be coming. And I actually got to the station  
5 about 1 -- I don't know, 1:20, 1:30.

6 That was the first time that I had talked to somebody about  
7 any of the other incidents, and just -- you know, I thought it was  
8 noteworthy, the crews that were working Sunday worked Thursday.  
9 So the battalion chief driver then was the one telling me about  
10 their experience from Thursday's incident. And he said that --  
11 what I think is worth noting, he said that a resident had come up  
12 to him and said, hey, you know, we've had problems; my gas bill  
13 has been \$400, and I've called Atmos.

14 And this is the first time that we've seen people come out,  
15 is after that incident Thursday morning. Drew, the chief's  
16 driver, was very pleased about how quickly he felt like Atmos  
17 responded. Because we call for the gas company all the time,  
18 right, to cut the gas off when we feel like it's not safe after  
19 somebody's had a fire at their home. He just remarked about how  
20 quickly Atmos came that time. So they felt good that they had  
21 notified the gas company and that that process kind of had -- that  
22 notification process had taken place.

23 So then as far as the rest of my involvement that day, we had  
24 our briefing meeting Sunday with you guys at 35's. And this was a  
25 very eye-opening experience. I really had no idea what to expect,

1 and you guys did a great job of explaining that. And, of course,  
2 at the beginning of the meeting while we were waiting for Ravi to  
3 arrive, we started getting word that Atmos was doing another  
4 evacuation. So there was a lot of points there that it was really  
5 hard to understand what was happening, because it was clear that  
6 the Atmos reps in our room weren't getting the information from  
7 the operations people that were conducting the evacuation at the  
8 apartment complex.

9 And we had issues about who was managing the evacuation,  
10 because when we started shutting down the process on Saturday, one  
11 of my concerns was how were evacuations going to be handled moving  
12 forward. Because Atmos said, you know, we're going to continue to  
13 look for these and it might be that we have to do more  
14 evacuations. And I was talking with Benny, who was, I think, one  
15 of their operations managers in the trailer on Saturday, and he  
16 said, we'll handle it. And I was like, okay. Because for us to  
17 muster the resources that we did to move people out as far as  
18 Suburbans and all that stuff that we did on Friday, it takes a lot  
19 of time and people to get that in place, especially over a  
20 weekend. And unless it was an emergency or life safety situation,  
21 we really felt like that was something that Atmos needed to  
22 handle.

23 So when the apartment evacuation started on Sunday, I was  
24 really trying to understand what was happening, because at the  
25 same time, a hazmat call had been reported. So we heard that over

1 the station radio and we were trying to figure out was Atmos doing  
2 work in that area, and because of the smell of gas in the  
3 neighborhood, had somebody called that in or did Atmos call that  
4 in? So I was working with the Atmos reps in the room, and they  
5 actually called Benny and said, Benny, what happened? Because I'm  
6 thinking you told me that you were going to manage these  
7 evacuations.

8 And he said that they were drilling; they found a grade 1  
9 leak in the area. So we knew that there wouldn't be gas to those  
10 apartments, because we just have electric service to most  
11 apartments here. But we were kind of perplexed as to why that  
12 apartment complex was going to be evacuated if it didn't have gas  
13 going to it. And Benny said, you know, we were looking in that  
14 area; we found a grade 1 leak up against basically a line that's  
15 in the back side of the apartment complex, and we felt that we  
16 needed to evacuate it, so we called 911. So that was how we ended  
17 up involved in that process again.

18 We continued to have the rest of our meeting while we were  
19 getting updates from the battalion chief that was running the  
20 incident at the apartment complex. He was with a Dallas police  
21 chief, and the entire time, we kept saying we need -- they were  
22 asking for an Atmos rep to come to the apartment complex, somebody  
23 that could talk to residents. And so we -- I got back on the  
24 phone with the Atmos reps in the room at 35's and said we need a  
25 public information officer to go to the apartments, and he's

1 telling me it's done.

2 We move on. We finish our meeting, and we keep getting  
3 phone -- I think you guys all left. We got the police chief on  
4 the phone in addition to the battalion chief that were at the  
5 apartment complex, and they were like, we need help out here; we  
6 need Atmos, I've got all these residents that are upset.

7 So at that point we went back to the command post at Webb  
8 Chapel and Larga, where Atmos was still set up, and said, what's  
9 going on? We need a PIO out there, because they still hadn't sent  
10 one. So we were trying to kind of figure out communication  
11 problems that we were having. Found out that they still hadn't  
12 sent one, so we got with their public affairs person at Atmos and  
13 their -- can look up her name too -- Ms. Beauchamp. So she's --  
14 yeah, public affairs. I wanted to make sure I wasn't misspeaking.

15 She said she would go, but we continued to feel like we were  
16 going to have a problem with these evacuations, so that was when  
17 the -- Deputy Chief Creager and I were both working and decided we  
18 needed to go ahead and get our command van back out there, and  
19 that this was going to be a problem that we didn't expect as far  
20 as more evacuations.

21 And as we continued to talk, we really felt like we needed  
22 somebody to do monitoring for us instead of -- because we weren't  
23 getting good communication from Atmos. So at that point we  
24 decided to staff a hazmat recon team that could then be in the  
25 area. We knew that it was likely that we'd continue to get hazmat

1 calls because, one, the neighborhood is just on edge, but, two,  
2 Atmos is going to continue to look for these leaks and if they  
3 find something, and then the smell, you know, makes neighbors  
4 aware, they're going to call it in. So just from a standpoint of  
5 trying to manage our department's resources, we felt like it would  
6 be better to have kind of a quick recon team that can make runs in  
7 this area and decide if we need to activate the full hazmat team,  
8 because the full hazmat team had been activated when that  
9 apartment evacuation happened.

10 So I stayed on scene till about 5:00 on Sunday, just to make  
11 sure that Chief Creager had things going his way. We got the  
12 command van, which is the shelter that you guys have seen, at Webb  
13 Chapel and Larga for us coming our way. And he ended up ordering  
14 throughout the night four engines and two trucks, a battalion  
15 chief and a rescue to be on standby.

16 Later that night, we had a structure fire come in that wasn't  
17 gas related, but of course anything in that area that was the  
18 first question that we needed to ask and find out. And we wanted  
19 to have this team really staged close by that knew about what was  
20 going on in the area. Because our fear was, as things got busy  
21 overnight, you might get fire department resources not familiar  
22 with the gas incident, and that wouldn't be safe for them, plus it  
23 also wouldn't provide the best service to the people in that  
24 neighborhood. So we felt like we had the right game plan for  
25 them.

1           They stayed at the command post until about 2:00 that night.  
2 The rescue had made two runs that were both medical runs, not gas  
3 related, and after about 2:00 that night, they decided to scale  
4 back and release those resources. The only thing that stayed was  
5 the hazmat group, and I continued to get reports from Captain  
6 Baker about that and then first thing yesterday morning to say,  
7 how did this work? Because we had planned on those guys having to  
8 be up all night and we needed to make a decision about if we were  
9 going to hire more to work the next 12-hour shift.

10           And it was working well, and Atmos had been communicating  
11 with him. Anytime that Atmos would discover a leak, we would be  
12 able to send our fire department guys there to do a reading  
13 outside the structure. Often they would go to the meter, get a  
14 reading outside, and then they would also get inside if the  
15 homeowner would let them and do a reading inside.

16           They did that overnight, Sunday to Monday, and ended up  
17 evacuating three homes just because of the readings that were on  
18 the outside and Atmos wanted to evacuate those homes. So they  
19 were there -- they reported that. And that basically gets me to  
20 6:00 yesterday morning when I came here and the rec center wasn't  
21 open. So --

22 Q. All right. Thank you.

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. If I could just go back to some of the few things you just  
25 summarized --

1 A. Sure.

2 Q. -- just to kind of get the timeline straight. So you  
3 transitioned on Friday to -- you got the update at 4:00 Friday.  
4 You transitioned to becoming, you know, on shift at 5. And then  
5 you kind of got updated on what was going on, on the Friday at the  
6 Espanola house.

7 A. Right.

8 Q. Okay. And what were, what were you told exactly? What was  
9 the update?

10 A. I mean, we had a -- I guess I had an update about that the  
11 perimeter continued to expand, that they at that time had two  
12 engine companies that were going to help with either -- and I  
13 wasn't clear if it was, are they taking residents to their home or  
14 if they're just getting the information that they need to go find  
15 the medication or go find the pet. But at that point I was just  
16 updated that our resources were being used to help members -- or  
17 residents with collecting items that they needed for that  
18 overnight; medication, something essential.

19 Q. Right. Was it clear to you that it was gas related?

20 A. It was clear to me that it was gas related just from seeing  
21 the picture. So yeah. I don't --

22 Q. Who sent you the picture?

23 A. Well, on TV.

24 Q. On TV. Okay.

25 A. Yeah. By that night -- well, and I guess the other thing was

1 we probably got -- I got an email page that morning too. Our  
2 dispatch center will update us with kind of significant comments,  
3 and the one that came across said something like, you know,  
4 several callers are reporting an explosion. So yeah, for me, I  
5 just assumed that it was gas related. And then, like I said,  
6 looking at the picture of the house made me feel that it was gas  
7 related.

8 Q. Yeah. So you were aware of the Wednesday and Thursday  
9 incidents at Durango Street?

10 A. By the time Friday night happened, I was. Yeah. I mean, and  
11 I knew that there had been fire calls there. I didn't realize  
12 they were gas related until Friday night.

13 Q. Okay. So then you -- at that time then the evacuation was  
14 expanding. And then the interaction with Atmos on Saturday, that  
15 was all at the command post?

16 A. Yes. I didn't go -- I mean, the only two places I went  
17 Saturday were here to the rec center and then to the command post.

18 Q. This rec center?

19 A. Yes. Yeah.

20 Q. So exactly what was going on at the rec center? Was that  
21 Atmos's --

22 A. It was a place that they decided to tell residents -- or if  
23 you'd been evacuated, you could go to the rec center and you'll  
24 meet up with Atmos resources. In fact, I mean, there was a flyer  
25 that was on the front of -- front door. I don't know if you guys



1 have seen that. I took a picture of it so that I would have the  
2 information to give to residents. But it was just, this was a  
3 temporary sheltering space to hook up residents with Atmos. It  
4 was not to be used as a shelter by the city; it's just a meeting  
5 place.

6 Q. Oh. For residents to come and get resources?

7 A. For residents to come and get resources from Atmos.

8 Q. Okay. Was Red Cross or anyone here?

9 A. No. That was one of the other complaints that kind of got on  
10 Chief Padgett's radar and that prompted me to come here, was we  
11 had also been told that Red Cross wasn't here. And so I came to  
12 look and they weren't here.

13 Q. Okay. So when you arrived -- you said you came to the rec  
14 center first?

15 A. Um-hum.

16 Q. And was Atmos here?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Yeah. Okay. Was there -- do you know if at any time they  
19 had left the rec center?

20 A. I got the impression that they had, because when I called  
21 Celina, who was at the command post, she said, we just sent  
22 somebody there. So it made me -- she didn't say -- because I told  
23 her, I said, hey, we're getting reports that you guys are not  
24 there. And she was saying basically you're right, we weren't  
25 there, but we are sending somebody; she should be there now.

1 Q. Okay. Do you know how Atmos got the word out to residents,  
2 or was that through you guys?

3 A. To come here --

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. -- or -- no, I don't know for sure. I think it was probably  
6 through us, but I don't know.

7 Q. Okay. That's fine. So then after you came to the rec  
8 center, you went to the command post?

9 A. I did. Yeah.

10 Q. And touched base with Celina there, or who was --

11 A. You know, there were a handful of women there. I don't know  
12 if one of them was Celina. I assume it was, but I don't know. So  
13 it was one of those. I went into the command post and identified  
14 myself, and they had probably 10 people in there, so I'm not sure.

15 Q. Oh, okay. And you just had conversations there about --

16 A. Yeah, yeah.

17 Q. Okay. And that's when you heard about they were probably  
18 lifting off the evacuation, having a press conference?

19 A. Yes. Yeah.

20 Q. Did you use the DART bus that was --

21 A. Uh-huh.

22 Q. -- taking residents --

23 A. So the DART bus wasn't taking residents back and forth. It  
24 was just there as a shelter, a place for them to sit while they  
25 were waiting to be transported --

1 Q. Transported.

2 A. -- yeah, or escorted back. Yeah.

3 Q. To their house. Okay. And who would escort them? You guys?

4 A. Fire department.

5 Q. Fire department. Okay. So then the press conference  
6 happened, okay, and then all the -- okay. And then that's when  
7 you received notification, once they finished that, residents were  
8 allowed to go back in but they had no gas service.

9 A. Right. Right.

10 Q. And then you got notice that we were coming, NTSB was coming.

11 A. That night. I want to say around 8:30 or 9:00 was when I got  
12 the phone call. Yeah.

13 Q. Because that's when we got the phone call.

14 A. Yeah. Yeah.

15 Q. So yeah. And then -- okay. And then -- yeah, and then the  
16 following -- you were -- the next day, Sunday, you were at --  
17 where were you?

18 A. When I got the phone call or --

19 Q. Or -- no. Where were you just on Sunday, like, before you  
20 met with us at the organizational meeting?

21 A. So I was at home --

22 Q. Oh, you were at home. Okay.

23 A. -- before I came to 35.

24 Q. All right. Okay, great. Thank you.

25 So how did -- so from what I understand, you and Atmos were

1 working together on the evacuations, or the fire department was  
2 working with Atmos on how to evacuate after Friday's incident.  
3 How do those decisions exactly get made, and who makes the final  
4 decision to evacuate?

5 A. About evacuation?

6 Q. Yeah.

7 A. So I wasn't involved in any of those decisions about  
8 evacuations. I was asked later -- you know, police were asking me  
9 what authority do we have; who makes this call? And I can tell  
10 you that as an incident commander, if Atmos tells me this place  
11 isn't safe, we need to evacuate, I'm not likely to go against  
12 that. They are who we call when we need the gas turned on;  
13 they're who we call when we turn -- need the gas turned off;  
14 they're who we call when we have a gas leak.

15 So all of those things are an indicator to me that, you know,  
16 this is a partner that we have or an agency that we have, a  
17 utility that we have, and this is all they do. We rely on them  
18 for that special knowledge. We can certainly do our own  
19 monitoring and decide also that it's not okay to be here or that  
20 we need to evacuate. But as an incident commander, I'm not likely  
21 to go against the gas utility saying we need to evacuate,  
22 especially given the fact that we had, by then, we feel like three  
23 gas-related emergencies.

24 Like I said, with the citizens that don't want to leave, if  
25 we had come to an issue about who has the authority to actually

1 make somebody leave, at that point it's only the county judge or  
2 the mayor that can make a declaration. So we would have -- you  
3 know, for the police officer basically to remove somebody, that's  
4 what we would have needed, and that's how that decision would be  
5 made.

6 Q. So on the first notification to -- well, when they made that  
7 first evacuation --

8 A. On Friday?

9 Q. On Friday, yeah. They decided to expand it to like 2 blocks.  
10 Who makes -- who said that? Like who tells the residents we're  
11 evacuating?

12 A. I don't know how it happened on Friday. Yeah, I mean, my  
13 guess would be that it's a joint decision, that Atmos would say we  
14 need to evacuate. I don't know. It could -- I mean, our hazmat  
15 team was also on location, so it could have been them saying we  
16 need to evacuate. But I would think either one of those, for the  
17 incident commander that was there managing the scene, would have  
18 said, if this is an unsafe scene, we are here to support you and  
19 we will help evacuate. Yeah.

20 Q. So but -- okay. So speaking generally about evacuations,  
21 it's always the incident commander that makes the final --

22 A. No. I mean, they would make the decision for what our fire  
23 department workers are going to do or assist with, and they would  
24 certainly be the one to say we are going to assist with this  
25 evacuation. And like I said, I really don't know how that

1 conversation went on Friday.

2 Q. Okay. So on -- okay. So I was going to ask you about the  
3 other ones, but you're saying you weren't present during the --  
4 okay.

5 A. I wasn't present for any of them, and I can only tell you  
6 that, as an incident commander, you know, on other incidents, that  
7 probably what's happening is the fire department senior-ranking  
8 person, which at that point, say, for example, on Saturday or on  
9 Sunday at the apartment complex, is a battalion chief. And if  
10 Atmos is there saying we have a gas leak and it's not safe, he's  
11 going to authorize our people to help remove those -- or help  
12 encourage those people to leave.

13       You know, we do it at fires with carbon monoxide, for  
14 example. We're concerned that, even if we have a fire in this  
15 side of the building, that because of air handling systems or how  
16 smoke migrates, that we might have carbon monoxide problems on the  
17 other side of the building. So we often go door to door and say  
18 it's not safe for you to be here and we would ask for you to  
19 leave; we can help you get your stuff. Sometimes it's that kind  
20 of evacuation; other times it's drop everything, you don't have  
21 that time.

22 Q. So for a carbon monoxide leak, you guys initiate the  
23 evacuation?

24 A. We do. Because it's -- we feel like it's not safe, and we  
25 know that there have been people that have died in remote

1 locations in the same building from carbon monoxide.

2 Q. Okay. So going to Saturday when they -- when Atmos told you  
3 we're going to lift --

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. Yeah. But you got different information about -- that the  
6 evacuation was going until Monday.

7 A. So that was the picture that was painted Friday afternoon  
8 kind of at the handoff. When my boss was going out of town and he  
9 was giving me the summary before I came on call, he said, you  
10 know, Atmos really feels like this is going to be a long-time  
11 issue.

12 Q. I see. But then they changed their position on Saturday?

13 A. Yeah, yeah.

14 Q. Okay. And so they made the -- at the press conference around  
15 3:30, telling on television, we're lifting the evacuation.

16 A. Right.

17 Q. Do you know how -- that's total evacuation? Like --

18 A. Correct. Yeah.

19 Q. All right. Okay. And you guys were in agreement with that  
20 because it's Atmos --

21 A. Yeah. Yeah. Well, and to me there was no hazard, right.  
22 They told me that this area did not have gas, so I felt, I felt  
23 that --

24 (Phone interruption.)

25 MS. JOHNSON: I don't know how that happened.

1 MS. GUNARATNAM: Right.

2 MS. JOHNSON: Yeah, so I didn't feel that there was a hazard.  
3 Obviously if I did, I would have said, wait, we're not comfortable  
4 with that. But I had been told that, hey, this whole area doesn't  
5 have gas anymore; we've turned it off. So I felt that the hazard  
6 had been removed. I knew that members -- or residents would go  
7 back to their homes, hopefully just to collect their belongings  
8 and then go stay someplace else, because they wouldn't have hot  
9 water or cooking, basically, if they had a gas stove, so -- or  
10 heat.

11 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

12 Q. So you felt comfortable because they just -- did they say  
13 specifically why -- did they say we did testing and we found no  
14 gas readings? Like what information felt -- made you feel that  
15 there was no concern?

16 A. That it would be comfortable?

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. Yeah, so the -- I mean, the key thing for me was that they  
19 had turned the gas off to this, you know, large area, not just  
20 those 2 blocks of Durango and Espanola, but -- you know, the  
21 perimeter was much bigger than that. So they had turned the gas  
22 off. They kind of explained that starting the next day they were  
23 going to be able to resume repair and then resume some gas service  
24 to each -- to incrementally -- they were going to start on the  
25 perimeter and then move inside.



1           You know, I inquired about how residents were going to be  
2 notified when gas was turned on to their home, and they -- you  
3 know, this is what they do if it's one home or a whole block full,  
4 but they were going to knock door to door. They're responsible  
5 for lighting the pilot lights for the appliances in the home. If  
6 somebody wasn't home, then they're going to red tag that door and  
7 leave contact information for the resident to get in touch with  
8 them. So that process is something that we're familiar with. But  
9 again, I just felt that because the gas was turned off that the  
10 hazard had been removed.

11 Q.    Okay. And your hazmat team wasn't at that time on Saturday  
12 doing --

13 A.    No, they weren't. No.

14 Q.    -- any monitoring or anything? Okay.

15           Okay. So -- okay. Did you -- I wanted to ask about the  
16 communication issues, how you felt they were between you and the  
17 fire department and Atmos, and you know, areas where you feel like  
18 it could be improved or -- during that incident.

19 A.    Yeah. I didn't feel that they were good. And I feel like --  
20 the best example for me is the incident that we had on Sunday when  
21 we were at Station 35, and we asked for a representative to go  
22 there and we were told that a representative was going to the  
23 apartment complex to be able to meet residents. And for 2 hours,  
24 our incident commander had asked for a rep, and we kept saying  
25 he's there; we're being told he's there. And after we left

1 Station 35 and went back to the command post and talked to Liz  
2 Beauchamp, found out that nobody ever went.

3 So that to me was kind of the epitome of how things had gone,  
4 that the people that I might be talking to in the room didn't have  
5 a good handle on what was going out in the -- going on out in the  
6 field, or the people in operations at the trailer were doing  
7 things that the people at Station 35, at the meeting, didn't know  
8 about. And it's just been very disjointed.

9 Like even when we had our briefing yesterday morning and we  
10 said, did you know that three more houses had been evacuated  
11 overnight? They didn't know. We constantly got different answers  
12 if we asked just a different person.

13 For example, Saturday when I met -- Kyle Slaughter seemed to  
14 be the person for me to get in touch with. And then when I talked  
15 to him later -- I think it was -- oh no, it was Sunday. I called  
16 him to see what he needed, because you guys were coming in town  
17 and he was no longer on-site. And I was like, well, who else can  
18 I talk to? And I just felt like there wasn't a good setup to  
19 maintain communications. Since I had been the one saying, hey,  
20 call me, call me, call me, and, you know, my number's in the  
21 middle of their trailer, but inevitably, none of the calls that  
22 happened came to me.

23 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay, thank you. I'll stop asking  
24 questions. I'll pass it off.

25 MS. JOHNSON: Okay.

1 DR. JENNER: Thank you. Steve Jenner, NTSB.

2 BY DR. JENNER:

3 Q. Along the same lines of the communication, do you have any  
4 type of evacuation drills with utility companies or gas companies?

5 A. We don't.

6 Q. Okay. Have you had in the past at all?

7 A. No. No, other than just real-world experience of --

8 Q. Right.

9 A. -- like when we've had to do things like that. No, we have  
10 not practiced that with the gas company or set up how that  
11 communication could go. That's certainly something for us to  
12 improve upon.

13 Q. Okay. And how about like internally for evacuation  
14 procedures and processes; is that something you've done?

15 A. That's something that we probably go through a training on.  
16 I wouldn't say necessarily that it's something we actually  
17 practice, knocking on doors, but we do have -- we're very clear  
18 about what our evacuation policy should be. And it's not just  
19 knocking on doors; it's making sure that, if we've decided this is  
20 an unsafe area, that you make entry into the home and make sure  
21 that anybody that's there has been evacuated. So we are clear  
22 about that.

23 And that's been a policy or process that's evolved out of,  
24 you know, maybe somebody giving an evacuation order and people  
25 moving through just knocking on doors and if the door is locked,

1 they move on. We've changed as a department so that we actually  
2 do a better job and a thorough job at evacuating to make sure that  
3 citizens aren't left in their homes.

4 Q. Right. And from your description of this incident, there's  
5 so much more involved than just knocking on the doors --

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. -- with the coordination of everything.

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. So is the whole coordination of getting resources, buses and  
10 a rec center or places to go, is that part of your process?

11 A. It is. Those are resources that we know are available.  
12 Fortunately this is a type of incident that rarely happens. You  
13 know, it might happen once or twice a year. But even more so,  
14 because we work on a shift basis, it's not likely to have happened  
15 to that incident commander maybe ever before. So it's something  
16 that, although we practice and train on and have policies, the  
17 actual practical application of it may not happen for years and  
18 years and years. But we do know those resources are available and  
19 it's something we've practiced doing when we work on how we would  
20 handle a situation.

21 Q. Okay, one question. At the very beginning, you gave us a  
22 description of your current duties and activities, and this  
23 sounded different.

24 A. For sure. Yeah. Yeah.

25 Q. Okay. So how did, how did that happen?

1 A. Yeah. So this on-call position, we rotate through a week at  
2 a time. It starts at 5:00 on Friday; you work until the next 5:00  
3 on Friday. It's for staff deputy chiefs and above. So I'm a  
4 newly -- relatively newly promoted deputy chief. That happened  
5 just April or May of last year, close to when they created the  
6 safety division. And so as we rotate through, my position as an  
7 on-call chief has happened maybe four times, because I was also  
8 pregnant during that -- part of that time and didn't have those  
9 responsibilities.

10 And then as the on-call chief, you really only respond to  
11 four-alarm fires or major incidents that would be of interest to  
12 community stakeholders, council people, something like that. So  
13 this was one of those incidents. But filling in, in that position  
14 is something that, you're right, probably had only happened to me  
15 -- you know, I only had one four-alarm fire the very first night I  
16 was on call, and fires are what we do all the time. So this was  
17 definitely a different incident, acting as the liaison for --  
18 between the incident commander and the fire chief. So definitely  
19 different.

20 Q. Okay. Just curious.

21 A. Sure, sure.

22 Q. One thing that was -- you told -- well, a lot of stuff you  
23 told us we didn't know already, so thank you.

24 A. Oh, sorry.

25 Q. One thing that really jumped out was the resident who

1 mentioned about a \$400 gas bill. Can you elaborate on that?

2 A. Yeah. I mean, I can just tell you who told me that story was  
3 Andrew July (ph.), who's the battalion chief's driver for  
4 Battalion 7 on B shift. So he works at Station 35 on the B shift.  
5 And as a battalion chief's driver, you know, they document during  
6 a fire incident kind of personnel accountability, where our people  
7 are, what operations are going on. But then they also make  
8 contact usually with the resident to find out information about  
9 the homeowner.

10 And while he -- that command -- or that driver. They're also  
11 called command techs. While Drew is standing outside, it gives  
12 him -- he's kind of a visible person that neighbors can come to.  
13 And so -- because he's not dressed up in bunker gear. He's not  
14 actively fighting the fire. So he said a resident had approached  
15 him and told him that, about the -- a \$400 gas bill, that they had  
16 been having problems in the area.

17 Q. Okay. And if I recall, that person contacted the gas company  
18 and got a very quick response?

19 A. No. So two different things.

20 Q. I'm sorry.

21 A. The resident that told Drew that said that they had contacted  
22 Atmos, but that this was -- she made -- I think it was a she. I  
23 don't know. She made the comment that this was the first time  
24 Atmos had come out, and Atmos came out because the firefighters  
25 called for Atmos because of the fire. So that's why Atmos

1 responded to that location.

2 Q. Do we know time frame of when that \$400 bill happened? Was  
3 it a week ago, a month, or --

4 A. I don't know.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Yeah, I don't know.

7 Q. Okay. Just in terms of process afterwards, how do you  
8 internally, your station and others, sort of have a briefing  
9 afterwards and discuss, you know, what went well and what you can  
10 do better? Can you walk me through that process?

11 A. Sure. I mean, a lot of that should happen with the company  
12 officers at the incident. Often, you know, just as you're getting  
13 things cleaned up, people will talk. There is a formal process  
14 that we go through where the battalion chief or deputy chief, kind  
15 of the highest-ranking chief that responds -- so in this case, it  
16 probably is the deputy chief -- is going to organize a time period  
17 for all the crews to get together to go over the after-action  
18 report.

19 Before that meeting, he often -- he or she will solicit  
20 input, right? We have -- you know, there's different forms you  
21 can give out to company officers and talk about, you know, what  
22 did you see when you got there; what orders were you given; you  
23 know, was anything unusual; what went well; what can we do better,  
24 that sort of thing, and they should collect that input and then  
25 put it into a document. And we do have a template for the after-

1 action review that they'll go through and then review together  
2 with all the companies.

3 Q. Is that done after just the most major incidents or is it  
4 done even like for a single-house small fire?

5 A. It's not usually done for a single-house small fire. Often  
6 that's just a verbal -- people will get together and discuss it,  
7 and battalion chiefs will even get their companies to come all  
8 together and talk about it. But as far as producing a written  
9 document, that's usually not done until, I think, by policy, it  
10 might be a third-alarm fire or a significant incident. So  
11 recently, if we have a firefighter get burned, we'll ask for an  
12 after-action report. Something like this, an after-action report  
13 will be generated.

14 DR. JENNER: Okay. Terrific. I think that's all I have, so  
15 thank you.

16 MS. JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you.

17 MS. GUNARATNAM: Jim?

18 BY MR. COLLINS:

19 Q. One question. Do you know when the hazmat team started their  
20 own service?

21 A. My guess would be -- do you mean the little four-man team  
22 that we started?

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. We can find out for sure, but they came in service Sunday  
25 night. It might not have been till 7 or 8, 9:00 at night. We



1 started working on that process probably at 4. But to get people  
2 to come in off-duty and get the right equipment and get stood up,  
3 it was Sunday night.

4 MR. COLLINS: No more questions.

5 MS. JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you.

6 MR. CHEVEREZ: I have none.

7 BY MS. COLLETTI:

8 Q. Alex Colletti. I just want to confirm one thing --

9 A. Okay.

10 Q. -- regarding the release from the evacuation. So you  
11 released the evacuation essentially because Atmos advised you to  
12 and the gas was off?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. They didn't provide you any other information for that  
15 release?

16 A. No, no.

17 MS. COLLETTI: Okay.

18 MR. MURDOCK: No questions.

19 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

20 Q. You mentioned briefly earlier that there was -- you and -- I  
21 think it was Captain Combs, maybe? There was a log that you  
22 said --

23 A. Yes. Yeah.

24 Q. Is that available? Is that something that --

25 A. The 214s, probably. Mark, I know, was going to -- he had

1 written a list. He had made his own notes. But then by Friday  
2 night or Saturday morning, we started 214s, which is an ICS form.  
3 It's an activity log. But yes, I'm sure he can get copies of  
4 those.

5 Q. Okay. When do you start the log? Like when an incident  
6 occurs or --

7 A. No. Well -- oh, if we use them, it's kind of as soon as we  
8 can get the forms. But they're not usually used. It's something  
9 that was on our radar if you're, you know, on our USAR task force,  
10 or if we know that this is going to be a big incident, then we  
11 just discussed -- Mark and I just discussed that, hey, this would  
12 be a good formal way to keep track of what we do instead of just  
13 on a pad of paper.

14 Q. Sure. And did you ever visit Espanola, the house --

15 A. No, I didn't.

16 Q. And when he was talking -- Steve was talking about drills  
17 with the utility company. Do you guys ever do other kinds of  
18 drills, like with chemical companies or smaller outfits with  
19 chemicals or --

20 A. You know, our hazmat team --

21 Q. Does?

22 A. -- does but we don't. As an entire just first responder  
23 group, we don't.

24 Q. Oh, okay. Do you know if the hazmat team that works -- like  
25 that's worked out with communication issues, like they deal with

1 the communication as they're doing a drill or something?

2 A. You know, I'm sure that, with different areas that they've  
3 worked with or -- for railroad, for example, that just as soon as  
4 you start building those relationships before you have an actual  
5 incident, communication gets better. And practicing those in a  
6 non-emergency event, communication gets better. So yeah, I would  
7 absolutely expect that things like that get worked out. Things  
8 like, you know, do our radios work in your facility; do you have a  
9 phone line I need to pick up if I come to your facility, I think  
10 those things do get worked out.

11 Q. Yeah. So with the radio interoperability between -- like are  
12 you guys on one frequency or --

13 A. We usually operate on two. It could be three with hazmat on  
14 location. So we have two duplex channels that we use for our  
15 first responders. And channel 1 is a fire dispatch channel, so  
16 they'll receive information and transmit information back to fire  
17 dispatch on channel 1. They can also talk to each other, and it's  
18 city-wide. We have simplex channels then that we use that really  
19 only have about a mile of range and are radio to radio or walkie-  
20 talkie to each other on frequency.

21 So when we get to an incident scene, we usually switch to  
22 channel 12 so that we're just talking radio to radio. It doesn't  
23 -- that frequency isn't transmitted back to fire dispatch. Hazmat  
24 can also turn on to -- we've got another duplex channel they can  
25 be on, or they can be on a different simplex channel if we needed

1 to separate their communications from our regular fire ground  
2 communications.

3 Q. And you're just between -- so that's just the frequencies for  
4 the fire department? You guys don't have any with the police  
5 department?

6 A. Our radios do have the ability to change over to their  
7 channels, and we can do that. It's often not done. Only in the  
8 biggest incidents, I think, do we make those changes. And usually  
9 that can be done just kind of at a unified command level instead  
10 of with our first responders.

11 Q. Right. But you have the ability to?

12 A. We do. Yeah.

13 Q. Yeah. Okay.

14 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Last follow-ups? Okay, do you --  
15 Steve, do you have any follow-up?

16 DR. JENNER: No. I don't, thank you.

17 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Is there --

18 MR. MURDOCK: Yeah, I had one more question.

19 BY MR. MURDOCK:

20 Q. Phillip Murdock, Atmos Energy. You brought up an interesting  
21 point about communications with the police department. Anything  
22 stand out around this incident with your discussions with the  
23 police departments? How were your communications with the police  
24 department?

25 A. So my experience Saturday and Sunday were really good. I

1 worked with -- they were in our command post so much of it was  
2 done face-to-face. And then if they needed to talk to their units  
3 in the field, they would use a radio. And my experience for this  
4 incident was just that they were there to support us as far as we  
5 needed evacuation assistance or help with blocking something off.

6 MR. MURDOCK: Okay. Thank you.

7 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, sir.

8 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. So I don't have any more. But is  
9 there anything you'd like, that maybe we missed, to provide us?

10 MS. JOHNSON: Not that I can think of.

11 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Well, you can always contact us --

12 MS. JOHNSON: I talked forever.

13 MS. GUNARATNAM: Well, thank you so much.

14 MS. JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you.

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 Lauren Johnson

ACCIDENT NO.:               PLD18FR002

PLACE:                       Dallas, Texas

DATE:                         February 27, 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