

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
FEBRUARY 23, 2018

* Accident No.: PLD18FR002

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Interview of: NATARSHA PRICE

Dallas Fire-Rescue Station 35
3839 Walnut Hill Lane
Dallas, Texas

Monday,
February 26, 2018

APPEARANCES:

STEPHEN JENNER, Ph.D., Human Performance Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

RACHAEL GUNARATNAM, Hazardous Materials Accident
Investigator, Emergency Response Group
National Transportation Safety Board

ALEXANDRIA COLLETTI, Accident Investigator
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
(PHMSA)

TED PADGETT, Chief of Staff
Dallas Fire and Rescue

JIM COLLINS, Regional Manager
Railroad Commission of Texas

PHILLIP MURDOCK, Director of Engineering and Compliance
Atmos Energy

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I N T E R V I E W

(1:55 p.m.)

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2
3 DR. JENNER: Good afternoon. My name is Stephen Jenner. I'm
4 an investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board in
5 Washington, D.C. Today is February 26, 2018. The time is
6 1:55 p.m., Central Daylight Time. We are currently at the Dallas
7 Fire and Rescue Station 35. The address is 3839 Walnut Hill Lane
8 in Dallas. We are here in response to the house explosion on
9 Espanola Drive that occurred on February 23rd, 2018.

10 We will be talking to Ms. Natasha Price, but before I do
11 that, I'd like to do is go around the room, have everyone
12 introduce themselves, and state your name and spelling, and who
13 you're. Again, I'm Stephen Jenner, S-T-E-P-H-E-N, J-E-N-N-E-R,
14 with the NTSB.

15 MS. GUNARATNAM: Rachael Gunaratnam, R-A-C-H-A-E-L, G-U-N-A-
16 R-A-T-N-A-M, hazmat investigator with NTSB.

17 CHIEF PADGETT: Chief of Staff, Ted Padgett, Dallas Fire-
18 Rescue, Papa-Alpha-Delta-Golf-Echo-Tango-Tango.

19 MR. COLLINS: Jim Collins, The Railroad Commission of Texas.
20 J-I-M, C-O-L-L-I-N-s.

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

23 MS. COLLETTI: Alex Colletti, A-L-E-X, C-O-L-L-E-T-T-I,
24 PHMSA, Accident Investigation.

25 MS. PRICE: Natarsha Price, N-A-T-A-R-S-H-A, P-R-I-C-E,

1 Dallas Fire-Rescue, Lieutenant of Arson Division.

2 INTERVIEW OF NATARSHA PRICE

3 BY DR. JENNER:

4 Q. Okay. Thank you. Well, let me start off by asking you to
5 just give us a summary of your background, how you got into the
6 fire and rescue industry, and work us up to where you are now.

7 A. Okay. My brother is a fireman for Dallas and now he's
8 chaplain for Dallas. But I came on 19 years and 4 months ago. I
9 started out in the inspections department, in inspections
10 division. Certified in, you know, TCFP, you know, Texas --

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. So, so I have my certification for fire prevention officer.
13 Then after I promoted to lieutenant -- I was lieutenant for maybe
14 5 or 6 years, then I moved over to arson, and have -- went to
15 Dallas Police Academy, and I did that in 2014, January 2014. And
16 certified peace officer of TCOLE, and then went to arson -- not
17 arson school, but fire investigation school, in McKinney. And
18 I've been working with the Arson Division as a fire and -- fire
19 prevention -- as a fire arson investigator since July/August of
20 2014.

21 Q. And since that period of time have you been working
22 exclusively in that capacity?

23 A. Yes. We do roughly -- I did like maybe, I think they had us
24 doing 9 months of training first, you know, riding out with senior
25 investigators, and then we moved over to be able to do

1 investigations. Most time, it's always you're with someone, so --
2 so I've been doing it roughly 3 years.

3 Q. Great. Thank you.

4 There's -- we're here for the explosion on Espanola and --
5 but we've learned that there are two other incidents since then,
6 during a few days leading up to that. And it's our understanding
7 that you had -- you responded to one of those. So if you could
8 just walk us through your day, when you went on shift and what you
9 did?

10 A. Right now, I'm one of the daytime investigators. So on
11 Thursday morning, which was the 22nd, a call came in that there
12 was a fire. So the two investigators that worked that shift, they
13 were -- I'm not, not for sure if they were already out or if they
14 left, because I can't remember. But anytime -- no. No, no, no, I
15 take that back. I was the 685 -- 684-person. Take that back,

16 Okay. I was on day shift that day. I was on day shift that
17 day and so when the fire came -- the call that a fire came in,
18 that there was fire coming out on the Charlie side, I jumped in
19 the truck, and so did my partner, and we went to the fire. They
20 asked for 684/685, but we were already headed that way.

21 So we get there, we can't go in yet because the fire was
22 pretty high. They were fighting it offensively. So the firemen
23 were trying to get the fire, you know, knocked down, and we had to
24 wait until we were able to go in. You know, they want to make
25 sure its safe. They want to make sure the fire's completely out

1 before we get a chance to go in.

2 So I had one of the people -- one of the lieutenants that's
3 training right now, so he went with me, and we, you know, do a
4 systematic survey of the outside, where we take pictures on the
5 outside before we go to the inside. And we took pictures of, you
6 know, the outside of the house. It took them probably about an
7 hour and 40 minutes -- it took them a minute to -- you know, maybe
8 not that long; it seemed like it was longer -- to get the fire
9 knocked down.

10 So once the chief said that it was safe for us to go in, we
11 already have our, you know, uniforms on, you know, our helmets and
12 everything for safety. We go on the inside and we start with
13 least burned to most, taking pictures of what was least burned to
14 what was most burned. And then after we did that, we come back
15 out so that we could talk to the person that was 685, which was
16 Lieutenant Gardner. He went and he was talking with the citizen,
17 the homeowner, before he was taken away in the ambulance, because
18 he sustained second-degree burns on his arms and leg. And we
19 talked to some of the other neighbors, Lieutenant Gardner did, and
20 talked to some of the other neighbors to try to figure out what
21 was going on, you know, what was happening, did they hear
22 anything. You kind of want to survey to see if people know
23 anything.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. And then, after that, you know, we'll come together and then

1 we'll try to, you know, figure out what possibly could have
2 happened. The homeowner said that we was cooking and -- he was
3 boiling water, and he was in the kitchen and it flashed over on
4 him, and that's how he got burned. It flashed over on him. And
5 he got out the house because it spread pretty quickly. He said it
6 spread pretty quickly, so he got out the house and -- you know, we
7 left it undetermined simply because we couldn't rule out, you
8 know, all the accidental causes. So we left it undetermined.

9 He stated that the flames were -- what did he say the flames
10 were -- that the flames were glowing red and out of control. So
11 that's what he stated about the flames. And he told that to
12 Lieutenant Gardner before he was taken off in the ambulance.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. And so, that's pretty much it. You know, we come together,
15 we talk, and then we go back, you know, and then we write the
16 report up, you know, as best we can. Try to be as, you know, as
17 accurate as we can with the instances, with everything that
18 happened, you know, and trying to tell the story. And they
19 knocked it down, you know, got the fire put out pretty good. And
20 pretty much it was a total loss, because it spread through the
21 whole house.

22 Q. Okay. We learned -- we heard a little earlier, got a little
23 education on the different classifications, undetermined and other
24 things --

25 A. Accidental, um-hum.

1 Q. Right. What additional information did you need to -- you
2 made an undetermined determination. So what additional
3 information would you have needed to make it something more
4 decisive?

5 A. Okay. So like, when its accidental, so I guess maybe if --
6 let's say, he was cooking and he accidentally knocked something
7 over, I mean, that would be decisive.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. You know, so didn't have any of that, you know. We're not
10 electricians, so I don't know if something was electrical. And
11 it's not definitive, so we don't know.

12 Q. Okay. Thank you. So he was cooking and suddenly boiled
13 water struck him, but something forced the --

14 A. No. He said the --

15 Q. I'm sorry.

16 A. He said that it flashed over on him.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. And that -- you'd probably have to ask Lieutenant Gardner
19 that more, because he told him that.

20 Q. Right.

21 A. So I'm getting this second information, because we combine
22 what he -- what the person said. So he spoke directly with the
23 man, the homeowner.

24 Q. Okay. So there's some -- let's see if I got this right. I'm
25 sorry. Did you say there was some discussion with neighbors,

1 immediate neighbors?

2 A. Yes. You walk around and you talk to neighbors to see if
3 they know anything or saw anything. Lieutenant Gardner spoke with
4 one of the neighbors. So I didn't get to speak with one of the
5 neighbors.

6 Q. Okay. What are some of the standard questions that you ask
7 of the neighbors?

8 A. Okay. You can -- you go to the neighbors and say, hi, I'm
9 Lieutenant Price with the Dallas Fire Department, did you see
10 anything? Did you hear anything? Those are the standard
11 questions.

12 Q. Right.

13 A. You know, just simple things like that, if they have any
14 information. Sometimes they see or they hear things that they
15 don't even know, you know, or they do know, you know. Those are
16 just simple questions like that.

17 Q. Right. Do you ask if they smell anything also?

18 A. Yeah, you can ask them that. They'll -- sometimes they just
19 offer that, you know. But most of the time, no, I don't -- that's
20 not a question I would ask.

21 Q. Okay. You had the chance to survey the perimeter of the
22 house --

23 A. We walked around the house, yes.

24 Q. Was there anything suspicious in terms of additional add-ons
25 to the house that didn't -- anything suspicious? Let me ask that.

1 A. Not that I saw.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Not that I can recall.

4 Q. Were there other family members in the house?

5 A. He was the only one at home at the time.

6 Q. Okay. Okay, did you get a chance to look at the -- like the
7 meters, the gas meter, electric meter?

8 A. We did take a picture of the meter.

9 Q. Can you recall your observations?

10 A. It was a normal meter.

11 Q. Everything looked like it was intact and functioning?

12 A. Um-hum. It did.

13 Q. Okay. In terms of the -- it sounded like this fire, you
14 know, you're saying it grew quickly and it was pretty significant.
15 Do you know if that caught people by surprise?

16 A. I don't know.

17 Q. Okay. We had a chance to walk by the house so we saw the
18 damage and the extent, so certainly it was significant, so we
19 understand. Is there any reason to believe that, one way or the
20 other, gas was involved in this incident?

21 A. I don't know.

22 Q. No opinion of that?

23 A. I'm sorry.

24 DR. JENNER: No, that's fine, that's fine. Great.

25 Okay, tell you what, we'll ask you about your -- the other

1 incident and your hospital visit later, but --

2 MS. PRICE: Okay.

3 DR. JENNER: -- but I'll just have people do follow-up
4 questions. So I'll go to my right. Thank you.

5 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

6 Q. Did you -- sorry, it's Rachael, NTSB. Did the gas company
7 come out?

8 A. When we got there, the first arriving company, they
9 automatically had already called them. So when we -- by the time
10 they called 684/685, all utilities are cut to the house, because
11 they need to be able to fight the fire.

12 Q. Did you interact with Atmos?

13 A. No, ma'am, I didn't.

14 Q. Were they gone by the time you arrived?

15 A. I don't even know if I -- I don't -- I didn't see them.

16 Q. Oh, okay.

17 A. So I don't know if they were there or not. They could have
18 been there on another side of the street or whatever. I have no
19 idea.

20 Q. Oh, but you know that they were notified?

21 A. I do know they were notified.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. And I heard that from the radio.

24 Q. So were you the one that took photos or --

25 A. Yes, I took photos.

1 Q. Okay. So when you -- so you say, because from what I saw,
2 the whole house was basically burned, right?

3 A. Yes, ma'am.

4 Q. So you stated with the least damaged to the most --

5 A. When taking photos on the outside, we start, you know, and we
6 go, you know, counterclockwise.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. And then, when we're inside, we do least to most.

9 Q. Oh, okay. So where was the least damage?

10 A. The least damage was on this side of the house.

11 Q. And that's if you're facing the front?

12 A. If you're facing the front, it was on the Delta side of the
13 house, was the least damage.

14 Q. Oh, okay. And so when you say least damage, what categorizes
15 that? Like what did it look like?

16 A. Where the least amount of fire was.

17 Q. Fire.

18 A. And then it goes to where the most amount of the fire was.

19 Q. Okay. So like there was good paint there, you could see
20 paint on the house still?

21 A. You can still see -- where it's not as much charring, you can
22 see some, you know, more wood, but -- because everything was
23 burned --

24 Q. Right.

25 A. -- you know. But it's where the -- where you can still have

1 maybe rafters are still up, compared to where there aren't any
2 rafters.

3 Q. Right. And so then you started going around the perimeter.
4 Did you see, in the back of the house, the pipe going into -- the
5 gas pipe going into the house?

6 A. No, I don't recall that.

7 Q. Okay. What -- did you see any -- what kind of things did you
8 see laying on the ground or --

9 A. The firemen had snowed it up, is what we call it. It was
10 foam everywhere.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. So I didn't see. It's white on the ground. My pictures show
13 white on the ground. So I -- if there's something under the foam,
14 I wouldn't have seen it.

15 Q. Right. Okay. So where was the stove where the man was
16 cooking?

17 A. In the kitchen, in the area on the Bravo side.

18 Q. Bravo side, okay.

19 A. The back, Bravo side of the house was where the kitchen is.

20 Q. And so, when you were taking pictures of that area, what did
21 you see there? Like was it -- what was the damage there?

22 A. The whole -- all the cabinets, everything, the kitchen was
23 burnt. It was completely burned.

24 Q. Okay. It was all charring and all that.

25 A. Um-hum.

1 Q. Okay. Did you see any evidence of a small explosion or
2 anything like things that (indiscernible) --

3 A. I don't -- everything was burned. I see fire, so I don't --
4 so I don't know if it was an explosion or not.

5 Q. Yeah. You didn't see any glass that had been maybe projected
6 out or --

7 A. Well, when I get there, firemen start doing ventilating, so
8 glass is going to be broken.

9 Q. Broken.

10 A. Right. They're going to break the glass. They would -- they
11 were -- they were using the ax. They were also using -- they're
12 cutting the roof, you know, trying to ventilate, because it had
13 gotten in -- the smoke, the fire had got in the attic space, so --

14 Q. Okay. And 6- -- so you were 684, and 685 was Gardner?

15 A. Yes, ma'am.

16 Q. And do you know the time -- I bet this is documented
17 somewhere, but the time of -- the fire was extinguished?

18 A. I don't have that.

19 Q. Oh, okay. That's okay, we can look that up.

20 A. Yeah. We can get it, but I don't have it.

21 Q. And so you arrived -- do you know the time of arrival, when
22 you actually came on-site?

23 A. Chief would have that too, the time 684/685 got there.

24 MR. PADGETT: I have that. This is Ted Padgett. 684, is
25 that what you were that day?

1 MS. PRICE: Yes, sir.

2 MR. PADGETT: She arrived at 10:47. She cleared the scene at
3 11:36. You asked about out-taps. Out-taps was at 1337, which was
4 1:00, so it actually would have been mocked-up before that. It
5 must have been when the last unit pulled off. So that's what they
6 have out-taps, 11:47, which means everything is done and cleaned
7 up.

8 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

9 Q. Right. When you said the fire coming out of the Charlie
10 side, what does that Charlie side mean?

11 A. When -- okay, so this is the house. Okay, this is the front
12 of the house. Alpha is the front and Bravo, Charlie, Delta. So
13 the fire was coming on the -- let me double check because I see a
14 lot of fires. Let me make sure I got that right.

15 Yep, here. So it was coming on this side, the Charlie side,
16 the Delta side. It's just the direction of the house.

17 Q. Okay. Great. Oh, sorry. The injured -- the homeowner that
18 was injured, you said second-degree burns. Do you know the
19 location of those injuries?

20 A. I think Lieutenant Gardner said it was his arm and maybe his
21 leg. Right arm and right leg. But you might have to ask him that
22 to be for certain, but I know it was second-degree burns.

23 Q. Okay. And you said Gardner is the one that spoke to --

24 A. 685. Yes, he was 685, Lieutenant Gardner. Yes.

25 Q. He spoke directly to the homeowner?

1 A. Yes, he did.

2 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. All right.

3 DR. JENNER: Okay. Thank you. Chief?

4 MR. PADGETT: I have nothing else.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No questions.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Nothing.

7 MS. COLLETTI: I have no questions.

8 DR. JENNER: Terrific.

9 BY DR. JENNER:

10 Q. Okay. Thank you for that portion.

11 A. Okay.

12 Q. You've got a -- some information on your visit to the
13 hospital in relation to the Espanola --

14 A. Okay. So, myself and one of our senior fire prevention
15 officers, who is also a investigator, he was a Spanish speaker.
16 He went with me because the injured people were Spanish speakers,
17 so he spoke with them. And so, everything was translated back
18 from what he spoke to him and from what he spoke to them, to me.
19 And the only person that I was able to speak to that spoke English
20 was the 15-year-old son, the young man. And I had him draw me a
21 picture of his house in relation to the inside of how -- the
22 layout of the house. And that's what he did.

23 Q. All right.

24 A. That's what he did, yes.

25 Q. Okay. Did you talk to him or the family about what they --

1 A. I did, I asked him what happened.

2 Q. Right, right. Yeah.

3 A. He said they were sleeping and they woke up and the ceiling
4 was on them. And that's all he knew. He was trying to get his
5 family out.

6 Q. Okay. That's --

7 A. That was it.

8 Q. Yeah, that's --

9 A. Um-hum.

10 Q. He was sleeping and then everything --

11 A. Sleeping. Um-hum.

12 Q. So I don't need to ask you hearing, smelling, seeing anything
13 beforehand.

14 A. I did not -- he -- that's what he -- all I could get out of
15 him. They was pretty upset, you know, wanting to know where the
16 rest of, you know, the family was or whatever.

17 Q. Right.

18 A. So I just talked to him, and I said, well, can you just show
19 me a drawing, do me a drawing of your house. And he showed me the
20 drawing of the house, you know, the inside. And that was it.

21 Q. Okay. Can you talk about the injuries of the family, of the
22 survivors?

23 A. Am I -- okay.

24 Q. Oh, I'm sorry, I don't mean to put you on the spot there.

25 A. No. Just wanted to make sure it's nothing with HIPAA,

1 whatever.

2 Q. Okay. Oh, sure.

3 A. He sustained cuts and bruises, you know, of course, from the
4 ceiling falling on him. His grandmother, I think she had maybe a
5 foot injury, some type of maybe a fractured foot. I'm not for
6 sure. You'd probably have to ask Molina that, because he spoke in
7 Spanish to what was her -- but just visibly she had, you know, a
8 few cuts and bruises. Then the mother had cuts and bruises, you
9 know, because everything. And the father, he had a big gash,
10 laceration on his left cheek. And then, as you know, the 12-year-
11 old didn't make it. I don't know what her --

12 Q. Right.

13 A. I just know she didn't make it. I don't know what --

14 Q. Were any -- I'm sorry.

15 A. No, go ahead.

16 Q. Were any of the people admitted to the hospital or just
17 treated and released?

18 A. I don't know that either.

19 Q. Okay. Okay. Good to know, we didn't know that information
20 before. Thank you.

21 DR. JENNER: Great. Thank you. I'll pass it around again.

22 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

23 Q. Okay. So you didn't go -- did you go to the house?

24 A. No. I did not.

25 Q. Oh, you just --

1 A. I went to the hospital.

2 Q. The hospital straight.

3 A. Yes, ma'am.

4 Q. Is this, this interaction documented anywhere or -- the
5 hospital visit, is it --

6 A. It's in -- we have casualty report. We have to put that in
7 our casualty report, yes. So all that information would be in
8 that.

9 Q. All right. Did -- sorry. What was his name -- Melan,
10 Melanie?

11 A. Rene Molina.

12 Q. Molina. Sorry. Did he ask them, by any chance, if they had
13 smelled odor beforehand?

14 A. I don't know.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. I don't know. I can't answer that. I don't know.

17 Q. Sure.

18 A. From my understanding, the questions we want to know, what
19 were you doing at the time of the fire? And across the board,
20 they all said they were sleeping. From what he translated to me,
21 they were sleeping, and they woke up and the ceiling was on them.

22 Q. Okay. All of them were sleeping?

23 A. They were all sleeping.

24 MS. GUNARATNAM: All right. Okay, I don't have questions --

25 DR. JENNER: Okay.

1 MR. PADGETT: Ted Padgett. Just to clarify, we had, on the
2 second -- or the explosion, we had four transports. Actually we
3 had five, counting the CPR that was a DOA. And so, of the four
4 that were transported to Parkland, one was released shortly after
5 being admitted; the other three were admitted, and one is still in
6 the hospital as of today, the 26th. The -- I think what
7 Lieutenant Price was saying is Rene Molina -- he's been a peace
8 officer quite a while. He's also a investigator. He would have
9 the victim and the witness statements. So we'll get those
10 provided to you, but that's what she had taken along with the
11 casualty reports. That's all I have, just to kind of make that
12 statement.

13 DR. JENNER: Thank you. We'll continue --

14 MR. COLLINS: No questions.

15 MR. MURDOCK: No questions.

16 BY MS. COLLETTI:

17 Q. Just one question for you. Oh, this is Alex Colletti, PHMSA.
18 Apologies.

19 Did they mention, the son when you spoke to him or any of the
20 other family members, when Officer -- Mr. Molina translated for
21 you, did any of them mention anything occurring in the couple of
22 days beforehand, the day of, that night earlier? Anything unusual
23 that they --

24 A. Not to my knowledge, no.

25 MS. COLLETTI: Okay. Thank you. That's all I have.

1 DR. JENNER: Okay. Looking around. No follow-up questions.
2 Do you -- okay, we'll finish up, but I'll ask you one
3 question. Is --

4 MS. PRICE: Okay.

5 DR. JENNER: We've asked you a few, do you think there's
6 anything else that we didn't ask you that could help us with the
7 investigation?

8 MS. PRICE: No. Your questions were pretty thorough.

9 DR. JENNER: Oh, okay. Great. Well, with that in mind,
10 we'll end on that high note then.

11 MS. PRICE: Okay.

12 DR. JENNER: So thank you very much for your time --

13 MS. PRICE: No problem. Thank you.

14 DR. JENNER: -- and talking to us.

15 MS. PRICE: I hope I helped.

16 DR. JENNER: It's 2:20. Absolutely.

17 MR. PRICE: Thank you.

18 (Whereupon, at 2:20 p.m., 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 Natarsha Price

ACCIDENT NO.: PLD18FR002

PLACE: Dallas, Texas

DATE: February 26, 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.


Deborah D. Sweigart
Transcriber