

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of: *

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

* Accident No.: PLD18FR002

* * * * *

Interview of: TED PADGETT, Chief of Staff
Dallas Fire-Rescue

Walnut Hill Recreation Center
Dallas, Texas

Tuesday,
February 27, 2018

APPEARANCES:

STEPHEN JENNER, Human Performance Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

RACHAEL GUNARATNAM, hazmat Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

JIM COLLINS, Regional Manager
Railroad Commission of Texas

JOSE CHEVEREZ, Pipeline Inspector
Railroad Commission of Texas

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

PHILLIP MURDOCK, Director of Engineering and Compliance
Atmos Energy

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>I N D E X</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Ted Padgett:		
By Dr. Jenner		5
By Ms. Gunaratnam		33
By Dr. Jenner		47
By Mr. Gunaratnam		79
By Mr. Murdock		84
Dr. Jenner		86

I N T E R V I E W

(1:05 p.m.)

1
2
3 DR. JENNER: Good afternoon. My name is Stephen Jenner. I'm
4 an investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board out
5 of Washington, DC. Today is Tuesday, February 27, 2018, and the
6 time is 1:05 p.m., Central Daylight Time. We are currently at the
7 Walnut Hill Recreation Center in Dallas. We are here in response
8 to the house explosion on Espanola Drive in Dallas that occurred
9 on February 23, 2018. We will be talking to Mr. Padgett, Padgett.

10 MR. PADGETT: Padgett.

11 DR. JENNER: I made you French for a second.

12 But before we do that, we'll have each of us introduce
13 ourselves with our spelling and who we're with.

14 I'm Stephen Jenner, S-t-e-p-h-e-n, J-e-n-n-e-r, a human
15 performance investigator with the NTSB.

16 MS. GUNARATNAM: Rachael Gunaratnam, R-a-c-h-a-e-l,
17 G-u-n-a-r-a-t-n-a-m, a hazmat investigator with NTSB.

18 MR. COLLINS: Jim Collins, J-i-m, C-o-l-l-i-n-s, regional
19 manager for the Railroad Commission of Texas.

20 MR. CHEVEREZ: Jose Cheverez, J-o-s-e, C-h-e-v-e-r-e-z,
21 pipeline inspector for the Railroad Commission of Texas.

22 MS. COLLETTI: Alex Colletti, PHMSA, Accident Division,
23 A-l-e-x, C-o-l-l-e-t-t-i.

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, Atmos Energy.

1 MR. PADGETT: I'm Ted Padgett, T-e-d P-a-d-g-e-t-t. I'm the
2 Chief of Staff of the Dallas Fire-Rescue Department,
3 P-a-d-g-e-t-t. We have an operator standing by.

4 DR. JENNER: Terrific. Thank you.

5 INTERVIEW OF TED PADGETT

6 BY DR. JENNER:

7 Q. Chief, if you would, just let us know about your background.
8 Start from day 1 when you got interested in fire and rescue, and
9 work your way up to your present position.

10 A. Okay. You going to let me say what I want to say? I grew up
11 in the booming metropolis of Strawberry Plains, Tennessee, which
12 the big industry was taking bottles back to the store. And since
13 we came up with plastic, ruined my career choice.

14 So after college, I went to the Air Force. I was in the Air
15 Force. Go out of the Air Force January 17, 1985. I was a pilot.
16 I was headed home to Tennessee, and stopped with a friend that my
17 dad had flown with when he was in the service, and their son was
18 my age. Didn't really know him that well from when we were
19 younger, but had said he went to work for the fire department. I
20 said tell me about this. He said they work 1 day, and they're off
21 2 days. So that was the hook that got me in.

22 I don't have family in Texas other than my wife. And I
23 joined. I had security clearance from the Air Force. So I was
24 sitting in rookie school on February 6, 1985; so 2 weeks after
25 getting out of active duty.

1 As I stated, I have -- I went to college, played football.
2 The school called Carson Newman University. It's in east
3 Tennessee. I got my master's from the University of Tennessee. I
4 got another master's from Columbia, and I got a doctorate from the
5 University of Texas at Arlington.

6 I have been with the fire department now -- I've started my
7 34th year February 6th, as I stated earlier. I have done
8 everything there is in this department. I have been a paramedic.
9 As everyone here, you have to hire on to be a paramedic. I rode
10 the box for the first 13 years, I guess. I was assigned to
11 special ops stations, hazmat, search and rescue, swift water.
12 Came up through the ranks. We used to have a rank back in the day
13 it was called a second driver. And you had a driver engineer
14 operator, a lieutenant, captain, battalion chief, deputy chief,
15 assistant chief. My position now is that I'm 801, which is the
16 number 2 to the chief of the department. So I'm the, I guess,
17 power behind the throne. I have four assistants that report to
18 me. So even though I'm an assistant chief rank, I don't know what
19 the -- I guess, I'm 800.5 because 800 is the chief of the
20 department.

21 Our Chief, Chief Coatney, just took the job here 18 months
22 ago. So he came here, and I've been, I won't say his confidant,
23 but I've been kind of the keeper of all things of record, and how
24 things are done or were done. And I'd like to go on the record to
25 say that I've worked for a lot of chiefs over the years. This is

1 the first leader I've actually worked for. So I'm excited to say
2 that, and that wasn't paid for, obviously.

3 I was the -- I guess, pertinent to this, I've had all kind of
4 training, and -- Harvard fellowships. I've had fire officers all
5 the way up. I've been at Texas A&M Mays Center. Gotten degrees
6 and certificates all over the place: Master Firefighter, Master
7 Inspector, Master Instructor, Master Investigator. I'm hazmat
8 technician, special skills, subject matter expert on WMD. And do
9 a lot of things for some of the governmental contracts -- SAIC,
10 EAI -- contracting here and there for whatever it may be.

11 I've been on Texas Task Force One, so I've worked at big
12 events, from the Winter Olympics all the way to Republican,
13 Democratic conventions, all kind of -- more hurricanes and things
14 than I can mention -- Katrina, Rita, 9/11. Been there, done that.
15 Right place, wrong time, I guess.

16 And I ran the hazmat program here. Actually got it off its
17 feet, started it. I left that in '05, I want to say, and we've
18 had others that have kind of taken the ball and run with it. But
19 I stayed with hazmat until really 2010 on the fringes, and then I
20 was -- our chief at our time -- I was considered, I'll say this
21 myself, I was considered Mr. Fix It. So I was sent from the fire
22 operations side to the arson investigations side. I was over
23 there as a deputy, and then promoted to assistant chief January of
24 2017. So I've been the assistant chief for 5 years and some
25 change.

1 And I enjoy movies. I'm a scratch golfer. I used to be an
2 athlete. Now I'm just athlete -- athletic supporter, I guess.
3 That's pretty much. My wife, I've been married 30 years. My wife
4 is a nurse at the ER Baylor here, which is a major trauma center.
5 I have one daughter. She's got a job in Columbus. Works for the
6 -- Amazon has taken over the world. So she's a TCU person, so go
7 Frogs. That's all. All right.

8 Q. All right.

9 A. More than you needed there.

10 Q. Terrific. I appreciate that. Okay. You know why we're
11 here.

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. And I understand that you had some level of involvement in
14 the most significant of these incidents. And if you would, just
15 walk us through your level of involvement from the moment you were
16 notified.

17 A. Okay. As I think you heard earlier, we have rotating on-call
18 just so one of the individual assistants or the deputies don't get
19 their teeth kicked in, quite frankly, for the number of calls that
20 come in. So in this particular case, I was not on call, but I was
21 because the chief of the department had a death in the family and
22 had flown out of state. Was gone since Thursday morning --
23 actually, Wednesday night, Thursday morning. So as we say, I had
24 the con.

25 I knew that the deputy on call -- actually it was to be

1 Assistant Chief Bret Stidham, who is over our emergency
2 operations, EMS. He was out of town for his daughter's something
3 down in San Antonio. And so Deputy Chief Lauren Johnson, who is
4 very capable, assumed his, what we call the 101, the on-call.

5 So where I came into this, long story short, when the chief
6 is gone -- let me kind of back up. My job as chief of staff is
7 primarily twofold. One, it allows the chief of the department to
8 be a figurehead that deals with city council, mayors, government
9 entities, you name it. And then that allows me to operate in a
10 roundabout way the department through the other assistant chiefs.

11 So I handle the day-to-day stuff and/or anything that's too
12 weird, wet and sticky, it kind of drops on my desk. Not that we
13 don't have a capable chief, but that seems to work really well,
14 and I've never had aspirations to be the guy. I'm kind of just
15 falling into this, and it shows you that any nut can become an oak
16 if you just hold your roots long enough. Side commentary. Sorry.
17 The fact is, through that, that allows him to stay free and clear,
18 and have an objective view. And I'm a sounding board, as I
19 stated, confidant.

20 So once he was out of town, obviously, all that came to me.
21 So I started getting inundated with just things here and there,
22 typical routine things for a city manager, mayor. Friday morning,
23 however, at about, I want to say it was around 7:00, 10 minutes to
24 7, maybe, I got bumped by the -- or paged by the dispatch, our
25 communications, that said that they had a fire. Well, the way

1 they put out what's called a 211 page, not meaning that we had a
2 two alarm fire, but it's a significant event. And so I got bumped
3 on that, and from that I'll get information that I can pass to
4 city council members, mayor, press, whatever it may be. And it
5 said that we had a fire, and then it said -- came back, and said,
6 correction, explosion or believed explosion on Espanola.

7 So at that particular time, this is about 7:25. I was
8 leaving the house at 6:45, so I was en route to Dallas just as I
9 do every morning. And I live approximately 20 miles outside the
10 city limits of Dallas, off Interstate 20, which is the town of
11 Talty. So it's a straight shot for me to hit 20 to 175, and I'm
12 downtown. You all may not be familiar with that, but it's easy
13 driving except for dead man's curve down there.

14 So I've got my Bluetooth on the phone, and I'm listening to
15 the radio dispatches, and hearing what's going on. So I hear 806,
16 which is our deputy chief that controls the north half of the city
17 on any day, and it's Ray O'Dell. He's a friend of mine. He's
18 been on about 30-something years. And I called Ray, and I said,
19 Ray, what do we have? He said, well, it looks like we had a
20 explosion, but we've got the people en route to the hospital. He
21 gave me an update on how many we had, and I'll give you those
22 specifics in a minute.

23 But I said, Ray, I've heard on the dispatch reports they're
24 thinking explosion. He said, yeah, you know, he said, Atmos is
25 all out here, he said, but I think we've got a handle. I said,

1 here's what I want you to do. I said, did hazmat roll on this?
2 And he said they did, but I turned them back around. And I said,
3 all right, Ray, I just want to tell you, I'm not going to make it
4 look like I've overrun you, but I'm calling dispatch and having
5 them kick out hazmat back there just for several reasons. One, I
6 want to get some readings that our techs understand. I know Atmos
7 does a percent per volume of air on their readings. And I said
8 our guys are used to doing parts per million. Now we can convert
9 that, but -- we have some people working today that are very good
10 at that. I want to get our field diagnostics out there just to
11 see what we have.

12 Okay. So I called dispatch. Hazmat rolled. Obviously, I
13 called Captain Baker by phone and said, hey, I need you to head
14 out to the scene and head up the hazmat part. I said, let me know
15 when you get there what Atmos is say, and then fill me in. I
16 headed to the office.

17 So I got to City Hall. I had three assistants that were off
18 that day. So I had a deputy chief, Chris Williford, who is kind
19 of my -- was my go-to guy that day. Because I'm getting
20 everything in the world from the city managers, and now hearing it
21 in the press, and the news they're wanting information. So I'm
22 typing up some situation reports at the same time thinking about
23 all the things I need to do. So we had a bad weather situation
24 that day. I had Greg, who -- not Greg, Chris Williford. Chris
25 Williford, Deputy Chief Williford, go down a list that I was

1 spouting things off, and I had him and another gentleman Thornton,
2 Chief Thornton, Ben Thornton, that were in the office that were
3 kind of my runners and making calls and doing things while I was
4 trying to get operations.

5 I called our GIS and told him make me some maps, poster-size,
6 where I could put them in my office, and see what we have where I
7 can start plotting things. I called for DART to send a bus
8 because I was already thinking evacuation. Police also. Police
9 had responded, but I asked for them to send several more elements.

10 I got -- somewhere in there, probably around, I don't know,
11 8:15, 30, maybe, I got a phone call from Captain Baker. Told me
12 what he had as far as some readings, and I said, okay, here's what
13 I want to do. He -- well, he said Atmos is talking about a
14 potential 2, maybe 3-block evacuation. And I said, okay, I'm
15 looking at this. In the meantime, I had asked dispatch to run me
16 any reports of gas leaks, calls, anything that had been in that
17 area over the past couple of days. And in this particular case,
18 they just went back to Wednesday, I believe, the 21st. I think
19 Friday was the 23rd. Yeah. And two particular incidents popped
20 up on Durango, which is -- actually shares an alley.

21 As firefighters, you know, we have a little saying, when
22 you're looking at street addresses especially if you don't know,
23 you know, it's always east is even, south's the same, north and
24 west are odd. So when you're looking at -- when I saw all the odd
25 numbers for the alleyway I knew that we were talking about the

1 side of the street there for Durango, and the even numbers on
2 Espanola, et cetera.

3 So we -- I said, that's interesting because they're a street
4 apart; then I saw the alleyway. So all this is going on while
5 I've got other people on the line. I'm typing. And so he says 2
6 to 3 blocks, and I said, okay, here's my thing: I've dealt with
7 Atmos many times before over the years, and before that it was
8 Lone Star Gas. And I said, whatever they're saying, I want you to
9 double it, possibly triple it. So I made the decision to go with
10 what Atmos had on readings, but I expanded it in the auspice of
11 public safety just until I knew what we had. I didn't have eyes.
12 I'm listening through my command, and kind of doing an incident
13 command off-site, obviously. I can't see it from my house kind of
14 thing.

15 So then it came to me that, okay, we've got a grid. Atmos is
16 telling us there's a grid that has this many streets. Okay. That
17 was, as you all have seen, kind of one of the maps that was a
18 grayed-out area. And I saw the elementary school, and I asked --
19 I know Captain Baker was saying he didn't know who told him to go
20 up to the school or whatever. But at that particular time, I was
21 talking to -- just spaced out. Rutledge.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Benning.

23 MR. PADGETT: Not Rosenberg.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Kyle.

25 MR. PADGETT: Tyler.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Slaughter.

2 MR. PADGETT: Slaughter, yeah. I don't know what -- what did
3 I say. Anyway, I had gotten on the -- let me back up on that.
4 Hold that point.

5 Probably 7, 8 months ago, I went down to the Atmos office on
6 Oak, and -- I believe it's Oak, right there in southeast Dallas,
7 and went in and met Mr. Slaughter, Mr. Rosenberg, Ms. Harris,
8 several of the higher-ups, I guess, that do the operations stuff.
9 Just as I do typically -- I used to do that in hazmat, get to know
10 who is around what, special utilities, and just had a time just to
11 sit and talk, kind of see what they were doing. They were -- at
12 that time Mr. Slaughter was the head guy. Mr. Rosenberg was in
13 there, and I think Mr. Rosenberg is this -- the area operations
14 manager or something. You know, they were asking me anything we
15 need, whatever.

16 We have, in the past, Atmos has -- as Captain Baker talked,
17 we knew -- when I was running hazmat, we knew that there was an
18 issue with the Atmos repair techs and our hazmat techs talking on
19 the same page. As I alluded to earlier, parts per million versus
20 percent per volume of air. So Atmos was actually the one that
21 suggested -- they used at that time those SENSITs. And so they
22 were the ones that suggested, hey, we'll get you -- they actually
23 got us some monitors that would communicate same stuff as theirs,
24 and we would use those as backups. And I've heard we're still
25 using those, which is good. We also use the SENSITs now for Freon

1 detection, any of the other whacko.

2 So we had a relationship, we, the special operations side of
3 the fire department had a pretty -- and I hate using that word
4 robust -- a good relationship with Atmos as far as training and
5 response to questions we've had. We've taught a number of hazmat
6 schools around this north Texas area, and have had utilized Atmos
7 and other department utilities, Encore, name some others, that
8 have brought out props, valving, things of that nature that people
9 can actually play with without having actual -- at the suggestion
10 of Atmos years ago, probably 10, 12, we started carrying Mustang
11 tools on the hazmat rig so we could crimp polyethylene line. Not
12 black pipe. We have plugs and things for that, but that pipe is
13 so brittle now we just -- but anything that was basically a 2-inch
14 down we could get there and dig and have the thing grounded,
15 bonded, and crimp it off to save. Because Atmos, that's one
16 thing, they don't -- they can't run Code 3. So sometimes it's a
17 long wait when calling them. And so sometimes you feel like a
18 one-legged man in a butt kicking contest when you're out there
19 waiting. So we carry those tools.

20 Typically, most of our techs, we try to not touch anything
21 until we know where the back pressure is going. Especially,
22 unless it's a 1-inch maybe smaller we may do -- or especially a
23 residential or something.

24 Okay. So back to where we were. So out of precaution
25 because they didn't know where the grid exactly went, and this was

1 in conjunction with Mr. Slaughter by proxy, we determined that
2 let's evacuate the school. It was also a good I don't want to say
3 practice, but a training drill for the elementary school. I
4 believe it's Foster Elementary. We had 738 kids, ages pre-K to
5 the fifth grade. So DISD came. That went really smooth. Again,
6 I wasn't on-site, but I'm getting intel updates. They said they
7 had no readings in the school. And so, again, that was a
8 precaution, but I also knew that should something, like it
9 typically does, creep, I didn't want that to be an issue that I
10 had to deal with later. So out of precaution, I went ahead and
11 pulled that trigger. And I've heard a lot of the interviewees say
12 this person or that person, whatever -- it fell in my lap.

13 I communicated that with the city manager and the mayor.
14 Told them what we were doing. At that time, Atmos, for whatever
15 reason, kind of went dark as far as returning calls and things.
16 So the mayor was getting a little frustrated. He, I believe,
17 reached out to the TRCC, and actually may have even gone higher
18 than that. They were trying to get some pressure on some Atmos
19 folks to return calls, PIO and all that stuff. And I know they
20 were overwhelmed. I honestly believe that Atmos was trying to do
21 right. I think they failed in the initial issue on Friday, if not
22 before, but I believe it's because they've never had anything like
23 that here in Dallas, and they didn't -- the people in place, it
24 took them a while to get their running legs back up under them. I
25 think they're doing a excellent job now, but at the time there

1 were some -- just like everybody, you know, it takes a while to
2 get up to game speed when you're going.

3 So from that, we rock along with notifications here and
4 there. I'm getting readings. I take Chief Williford and myself,
5 we came to the actual command scene on Friday at about -- I got
6 there probably 11:30-ish, and took a picture of the house with my
7 personal phone, just a front shot, just to see what it was I was
8 hearing. And based on everything I had heard, and what I saw, and
9 what my knowledge base was, I could tell this was a explosion of
10 some form. No fire damage, walls pushed out, brick veneer off the
11 front, Celotex and Styrofoam everywhere, siding, fences blown.
12 Damage would appear to be the majority on the delta -- alpha delta
13 corner really, maybe more on the delta side, but that's what
14 presented on the front.

15 The chief on-site the command post at this particular was
16 Battalion 7, which was a captain riding up, Combs, Mark Combs.
17 And I was confident with his ability. He's a squared away
18 firefighter. He's a good captain, knows his work. He's been one
19 of our training lieutenants back in the day, and he's real close
20 to making battalion chief permanent. So this is right up his
21 alley. So I was confident what he had done.

22 I came and spoke to him just to get a sit rep. Dallas police
23 had Deputy Chief Watson on location. He came down, and I talked
24 with him. We've known each other over the years. And asked him
25 what he was doing. I told him the evacuation area we had. I

1 wanted him to cordon off the streets, you know, DPD protection,
2 which he had already set up. But I asked him, I said, how many
3 officers do you have? He said I got 14 to 16. I said, how many
4 avenues are in this 4-block area? He said, about 16. I said, are
5 you counting the alleys? He said, no. I said, let's get people
6 on that. We had streets come out and bring barricades. I'll go
7 back. When I pulled up to the scene, I did kind of a 360 of the
8 area. I came up Larga. I went all the way down to, I believe, it
9 was -- let's see -- I need to look at something. Do I even have
10 it? Was it Mixon to the north? Or actually that would be west.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Fontana.

12 MR. PADGETT: Excuse me. East. I'm sorry?

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Fontana.

14 MR. PADGETT: It was just past Fontana. Anyway, I went --
15 did a 360 around that, came in. We came in from the south side or
16 southwest side right there off of Larga and --

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Gaspar?

18 MR. PADGETT: Yes. Thank you. Worked our way up, and then I
19 showed up at command. When I got there hazmat techs were just
20 putting up their monitors. They had been monitoring. And that's
21 when I came down and talked to Mr. Combs. Now back to that.

22 I told him I wanted to make sure he was keeping track of --
23 we call it a 214 on deployments. But Mark understood that a lot
24 of fire service, our incident command, they'll keep boards and
25 things like that, but I told him just keep track. I want you to

1 take pictures of your command board. And the only reason I say
2 all that, this is a significant event when you have a fatality
3 related to something as out of the norm. It's the same as when we
4 have fire fatalities. City of Dallas, you get -- I say you get
5 like there's some magic number, but the average fire fatalities,
6 fire fatalities in a city over a million is 1 per 100,000. So we
7 have, depending on what you read, 1.3, 1.4 million. So 13 or 14
8 fire fatalities a year. I think we had seven last year. But
9 before that we had 16, 14. I can show you the tracking. So those
10 are considered significant events. Anything here in the City of
11 Dallas that's a multiple alarm fire, large property loss,
12 something weird, it's going to hit the press, that's when we get
13 involved. So because of that, I was telling him, especially with
14 line-of-duty death and things I've had, just keep track of what
15 you're doing just for documentation later. Got it.

16 I spoke with -- there was Atmos guy, a contractor actually.
17 I can't -- I can just remember it looked like a drilling rig on
18 the back of his, I guess, safety vest, was kind of dirty. He was
19 talking to Chief Combs. Police, I had Box 4 there, which is our
20 response rig that brings refreshments, and they had just -- I came
21 really at lunchtime, not only to see the scene, but to ask if any
22 of the guys on the scene needed something. I was going to go get
23 them some food, water, whatever. The rehab van was already there,
24 and they had just dropped off McDonald's burgers and some other
25 things. So they were good to go there.

1 So we decided to formulate a plan of here's what I want.
2 Hazmat at that time we thought we had a handle on it. The
3 readings, we weren't getting anything. No one smelled -- I didn't
4 smell anything; no one else smelled anything in that area. There
5 were, I want to say, and I'm just shooting this number out, but I
6 want to say there was about 20 to 30 crews it looked like. When I
7 say crews, two to four people that had punched holes all around
8 this area. There are backhoes, shovels, you name it, in different
9 areas all around there. And I just thought, wow, this is bigger
10 than what we thought when we pulled in. I never smelled anything
11 at all though.

12 So hazmat, as I stated, they were clearing up to go because
13 we were being told, hey, we got a handle on it. It's a leak in
14 this alleyway. Obviously, this was an unfortunate issue, but
15 we're good. So Scott Clumpner, Battalion 9, was at the -- what we
16 set up as the command post at the corner of Larga, Story Lane,
17 Webb Chapel extension, right in that area. And it's a parking lot
18 shopping center thing across from the graveyard. And at that time
19 we didn't have an Atmos van or trailer that they have there. They
20 had been up the street somewhere, I think, and then Chief Clumpner
21 had got with them to bring them. Now they were about 30 feet
22 apart so they could talk.

23 That's when I, like I said, we started -- I got a call, I
24 guess, from NTSB, Mohammed somebody, telling us that you all
25 coming in. They had reported that to Mr. Slaughter. I told them

1 I had to talk to Mr. Slaughter. He's obviously been busy. And we
2 were told -- actually, let me back up. I'm wrong on that. I
3 didn't talk to Mohammed till Saturday. Friday night -- getting
4 those confused. Friday night, as I told hazmat, we were clearing
5 up, and I said, all right, hang here until the operations are done
6 or finished digging here. We'll shut this down, say 5:00, 1700
7 hours, and we'll go from there.

8 Well, I cleared, went back to the office finishing all the
9 other stuff that we do, and about 6:30 I got a call that they were
10 running again on gas odor or something, and it really wasn't in
11 this grid, but it was close enough kind of perk your ears up. And
12 then I get a call said, hey, they found some more things. We're
13 fixing now to evacuate neighbors and stuff. And we knew we were
14 going to evacuate this little 4-block area that was really
15 expanding. And I remember Atmos, I finally got a hold of, I want
16 to say it was Ms. Harris, and she stated, you know, that they had
17 -- needed a place. We set up the rec center here to kind of have
18 a holding area because -- they hadn't had a lot of people come and
19 ask for things around 3:00, but I told them, this is a blue collar
20 neighborhood and come 5:30 to maybe 7:30, it's going to be quite
21 lengthy. And I remember telling her, do you speak Spanish? And
22 she said, no. I said, you'd better get somebody speaks Spanish,
23 you're going to have a problem. And I said, I speak enough to get
24 you in trouble so you really want somebody that's going to be on
25 their p's and q's. So we opened up the rec center.

1 That was done through OEM. That's when I contacted them. As
2 I stated, we had a DART bus on-site in case we needed evacs. I
3 cut them loose at probably 3. And all this kind of ramped back up
4 after that. We thought we had it handled. So Friday night, I
5 kept the hazmat -- you know, get your stuff, make sure you're on
6 call, you're at the station.

7 Let's go on to Saturday morning. This is where -- Saturday
8 morning I came back in to Dallas. I got into downtown around
9 9:30, got call from Lauren Johnson, the deputy chief. She was
10 having trouble getting any information back from Atmos. And I
11 told her, okay, let me call some people. I called. I finally
12 called -- I went down the higher-ups order, and I got down to
13 Benny Rosenberg. He picked up immediately, and said, hey, I'm
14 here at their little incident command place, which at that time I
15 was thinking he was over off of Oak. I didn't know that he had
16 actually -- and I believe that's where he told me. I don't
17 remember all the conversation, but he said he was at the command
18 post, which now that I think, it was probably here. I was in east
19 Dallas, and I was going to go by and talk to him if I didn't get
20 any more calls. I was actually going to their office.

21 So he called, and he had Ms. Harris with him. He had a lady
22 named -- yeah, just spaced out. I got the name somewhere but --
23 what's --

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Ocham?

25 MR. PADGETT: I'm sorry.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Ocham from Atmos?

2 MR. PADGETT: Beacham. Is it Beacham?

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It is Beacham.

4 MR. PADGETT: Beacham.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Beacham.

6 MR. PADGETT: Beacham. So I got Ms. Beacham. She came on in
7 the mix, and I asked her what's going on, and she explained to me
8 it wasn't vouchers that they were going to be giving, but they had
9 some, I guess, cards where they could get incidentals or whatever.
10 And so we had decided -- this was Saturday. I got a hold of
11 Captain Baker again. I said, okay, here's what I need you to do.
12 We're going to split your team. I want you to hire back an
13 officer and three technicians to be a scout team so to speak. We
14 maintain the two in and two out. But I want you to set them up
15 with a Suburban and some monitors, and whenever Atmos punches a
16 hole, I want you right there in their hip pocket getting some
17 readings. Or if they have a house that they want to clear, I
18 think he's alluded to that, go in and make sure we have the right
19 diagnostics, we're talking apples to apples.

20 So that has been going on since Saturday afternoon, I guess.
21 And then seemed like every time we started to gear it down it
22 would expand. And so really my extent has now been, well, really
23 from the beginning, has been oversight and just kind of juggling
24 the balls to make sure everybody is talking to each other and
25 getting on the same page. In my opinion, as I stated earlier, it

1 was like most things, you have something you have to grab by the
2 tail and reel it in, put it in a little box with a bow on it, and
3 that's kind of what happened in the first few times, days, hours,
4 I guess. I'd says days, hours into Saturday. As I expressed now,
5 I've had a lot of dealings with Atmos and -- both good and bad,
6 but I will say that Mr. Slaughter and Mr. Rosenberg and the people
7 I've talked to, other than that brief period where I'm sure they
8 were overwhelmed, have been pretty responsive.

9 Now I feel like at first they were trying to keep a lid on
10 things because I understood from the business side this thing
11 could get out of whack and it's dollars flying out the door. I
12 get that. I also knew our side it's the public safety. That's
13 what I'm employed to do. And those two have to mirror each other
14 and marry up. But, like I said, since they've gotten their runner
15 legs under them, I think it's been going really well. And as I
16 alluded to earlier, last update is we don't have any citizens with
17 any unmet needs other than a lot of them want to just throw rocks
18 and holler, and so we're going to have a town hall tonight where
19 they can get that off their chest, I guess.

20 That was a long-winded round the world in 365 days. There's
21 a lot of stuff I probably left out. But when the Shiites are
22 hitting the fan -- I'm sorry. I hope nobody is Shiite. If it's
23 hitting the fan it's kind of -- I will offend everybody, and I
24 don't mean it out of prejudice or malfeasance. I grew up in east
25 Tennessee. I still have my own teeth and my shoes, but I do make

1 fun of everybody. That's kind of my way. Firemen, we make fun of
2 things just to keep from crying and stuff. So --

3 BY DR. JENNER:

4 Q. Terrific. Thank you.

5 A. I'm sorry. Around the world in 20 days, right? I told you
6 it would only take 20 minutes.

7 Q. Okay. Terrific. Just a couple questions.

8 A. Okay.

9 Q. You gave us a lot of stuff, but that's good. I made note you
10 had a conversation with Ray about the hazmat decision, and it
11 sounded that they --

12 A. With Bobby Baker you mean? With Ray?

13 Q. With -- I wrote down Ray. You can correct me.

14 A. It was Bobby Baker that I called. That morning?

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. You talking about? Yes, sir.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Ray O'Dell.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No. You spoke to Ray.

19 MR. PADGETT: Oh, Ray O'Dell, yes. I'm sorry. Ray O'Dell.

20 He's the deputy chief. I'm sorry. I was thinking there's a
21 hazmat tech Ray Thompson that is Bobby Baker's underling, and he
22 may have been on the call. But, no, I was speaking to Ray O'Dell,
23 yes.

24 BY DR. JENNER:

25 Q. Great. So a decision was made to send hazmat and a decision

1 was made to recall, and then you gave your opinion of that. Can
2 you --

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. -- shed a little light on that?

5 A. I talked to Ray, and I said, okay, what happened here? And
6 he said, well, I think they had an explosion, but there's no fire.
7 The patients have been transported. We've got a handle on it.
8 It's good. Atmos is on location. And I said, what readings did
9 hazmat get? And he said, well, hazmat was en route, but I turned
10 them around. And I said, okay. Man, again, this is a teaching
11 thing. I mean, Ray is an experienced battalion chief, but not
12 necessarily experienced on hazmat.

13 And so my first thing is when we have protocols on how
14 natural gas responses, all these different grades are to be
15 responded to and their inner MOPs, but a lot of officers out
16 there, I think the common culture is, you know, we see this enough
17 we have -- well, they're used to possibly a meter in the back
18 alley being backed over and whatever, and they, okay, we can solve
19 this, and we're on the road. They don't usually call us until we
20 see a 2 or 6-inch main with concrete going 50 feet in the air.
21 You know, they go, we need hazmat here now. So I think that was
22 the mentality.

23 And Ray, in his defense as a deputy chief that day, thought
24 the situation is over. Atmos is here. They got it. That's 99
25 percent of the time, Atmos comes in, we stand around. If we need

1 to protect some of their guys to get down in holes or whatever,
2 we'll stand by with a charged hose line or some type of a CO or
3 something that we can protect them in case it goes fa-voomp.
4 Because, you know, gas when it goes fa-voomp, that's a bad day,
5 and we've had that happen a few times.

6 So when he said he turned them around, I said, Ray, just from
7 a PR standpoint, and I mean, that's what I said, I want hazmat out
8 there. If nothing else, because I know there's going to be
9 cameras on this, they can get B roll of the rig there, but I want
10 them out doing monitoring. And I said, I want to verify what
11 Atmos is saying. And I remember saying this, I said, because I've
12 been with Atmos enough times that when their mouth's moving,
13 they're lying, so I want to make sure -- and I didn't mean that
14 ugly. What I'm saying is take what they're telling you as a grain
15 of salt, and I always -- I trust everybody, but I'm going to
16 verify. Does that make sense? So I said, I want someone that
17 understands what we're looking at, and what they're looking at.
18 I'm not here to protect any individual or company, but I want to
19 make sure I'm protecting the people that I'm sworn to serve.

20 So he said, I understand. And I said, plus, I said, Ray,
21 this is something else. We have to make reports to the TCQ and
22 the TRCC. I said, these reports that we send, not only to federal
23 partners and all of this just part of when we have a release, a
24 significant event, a fuel spill, whatever may be, we have
25 thresholds that we have to push out. And he said, I wasn't aware

1 of that, Chief. And I said, again, I'm not chewing on you. I'm
2 just telling you why I'm fixing to call dispatch, and I'm calling
3 Bobby directly on the phone, and I'm rolling them back out there,
4 so when they get there, you're not going, hey, why are they here?
5 And he said, I've just left the scene. Mark Combs is chief on-
6 site. And I said, okay. I said, I need you to go back,
7 coordinate that with Bobby and all because Bobby, as you all have
8 seen, he's probably a lot like me, unfortunately, but he is a ball
9 of energy. And so he loves hazmat as you all can tell, and he's
10 like the little energized bunny. If you give him something, he's
11 all over it. So -- and that's not a bad thing. I mean, he's the
12 guy that sits around, will call me and say, hey, what if? What if
13 we had -- okay. But that's good. Keeps you on your toes.

14 So that's how hazmat got back involved right at about 8:00
15 that morning after they had been brought and sent back. And so
16 even the hazmat guys, when I pulled up on the scene at 11, and
17 they were loading things, some of them that I know, and I won't
18 give their names -- you know, I rolled the window down a little
19 bit as I was pulling in. This was after we had done a 360. And I
20 asked them, I said, can I walk up there without any clothes on?
21 They go, yeah. They go, Chief, we don't have any. Then they
22 started MF-ing me and all that stuff about why they were out
23 there, which is agitation. I told them, oh -- you know. And then
24 when they realized it was a big deal, they called me later, said
25 Chief, we're sorry. I said, I don't ever take it personal. You

1 know, I pick on myself.

2 But they had come out there, and because they had not gotten
3 anything on the readings, you know, they're, like, why are we back
4 out here? So that's part of the culture too is when you have
5 certain hazmat teams members that are a little more vocal, they
6 get there and they browbeat if they think it's insignificant type
7 event or maybe over, they will browbeat some of the other
8 firefighters into, why are you calling me? We're the hut-hut team
9 that needs to be over here cleaning up a diesel spill right now
10 and whatever. But so that's kind of the thought on why and how
11 they came back.

12 And so that's all I was doing with Ray. Ray O'Dell, Chief
13 O'Dell was -- and I know he had a background. He actually, when
14 he first hired on was a fire inspector, and realized that he
15 wanted to fight fire. He came over after about a year or two to
16 the fire side, and he's loved it. But he couldn't get on the
17 firefighting side because you had to have 20/20 vision, and he had
18 glasses back then or something. So but he is very knowledgeable
19 on fire code things. So he has expertise in a lot of things.
20 Hazmat is not one of his. And so I just explained why. That's
21 all that was, a teaching moment for him in the future, maybe some
22 of his other chiefs. So that's how they got involved.

23 Is that what you asked me?

24 DR. JENNER: Um-hum.

25 MR. PADGETT: Again, engaged just out of precaution.

1 BY DR. JENNER:

2 Q. Right. What I might take away from your reply there was that
3 he thought perhaps the situation was under control because --

4 A. Yes, sir. No, he even told me that. He said, he said, I
5 didn't -- he said, Ted -- of course, we know each other so it's
6 first name, you know, on the phones and all this. And I don't
7 ever go by Chief. I'm Ted. Ted-o. But he said, Ted-o, he said,
8 I didn't see a need for them. He said, I turned them around, get
9 them back in service.

10 As you all heard earlier, our hazmat team is not a full-time
11 hazmat team. It has 10 personnel assigned to it every day,
12 minimum staffing, but they are assigned to trucks and engines and
13 ambulances. And then when a call comes in, they get off their
14 rigs and go. Captain Baker alluded to when they have an event
15 right downtown Engine 3, Truck 3, Rescue 3, Battalion 1, they all
16 respond. The hazmat rig is sitting back at the station. So it
17 has to be a fill-in or someone bring those diagnostics and tools
18 and decon, all that stuff to the scene. So that's problematic in
19 our current configuration.

20 I've even through this made a number of notes for Chief
21 Coatney because he's tackling a lot of things. He's kind of like
22 chewing on an elephant, and take a little bit every day. But this
23 is on his radar screen because, again, I like hazmat. I
24 understand hazmat. It was in my blood forever, still is, and
25 that's kind of where the fire service is going now. We don't just

1 fight fire anymore. It's a lot of not only EMS, here in Dallas,
2 like I say, we'll push 300,000 plus runs, and 200,000 of them will
3 be EMS calls. So the rest are fire and weird stuff, you know,
4 hazmat, ARF, swift water. Today even maybe it will be water
5 rescues, high angle, you name it. So that's kind of what the
6 citizens expect from us now is -- we even get called now because
7 the police officers here in Dallas, people want lights and sirens,
8 and we have under a 4-minute response to pretty much anywhere and
9 so they will call us. And we actually get to scenes before
10 police, which sometimes is not good.

11 But that's what the citizens expect of the fire department.
12 It's not just -- you know, now it's fire prevention and code
13 enforcement and education and EMS and all the specialty things.
14 Firefighting is kind of going this way, and that's a good thing.
15 But we have to evolve with it.

16 So really hazmat, especially for this region because they're
17 a regional partner, our hazmat team is engaged in the 16 counties
18 of North Central Texas Council of Governments. A lot of their
19 equipment is -- has been purchased through everything from state
20 homeland security grants, UASI grants, even the Council of
21 Governments. So we have a commitment not only to Dallas but many
22 times we roll outside our city limits, primarily to the east,
23 Kaufman County, southern Dallas County, even to Ellis County,
24 places like that. So -- took you down the road there.

25 Q. Okay. Great. Second question is, you mentioned you had a

1 good relationship with Atmos in terms of training and other
2 things. If -- just get you to expand on that.

3 A. Yes, sir. Atmos, they've built a Disneyland for gas workers
4 and firefighters up in -- it's on the, I guess, Richardson Frisco
5 border. I think it's more in Frisco. But it -- I could probably
6 be wrong on that. I could tell you how to get there. I'd have to
7 shoot you after I got there though.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. No. It's a gas leak training facility. And we've had our --
10 our hazmat team has gone through there a number of times. We've
11 had a couple of engine companies that have gone outside the city
12 limits just to see. But I, myself, have been there. It's
13 something that periodically -- matter of fact, I think they have
14 another awareness, you know, even tying in with dig tasks and some
15 of those other things coming up here probably -- usually it's the
16 end of March, first of April.

17 But no, any time -- and to my knowledge any time we have
18 asked Atmos can we X, Y, Z, they're all over it. Yeah, let's do
19 that, just tell us when. We'll make it available, and we'll have
20 people there. So that has never been a problem to my knowledge
21 with our hazmat team of cooperation and/or -- I mean, I even said
22 earlier that we had monitors there for a number of years that
23 Atmos had purchased and had given to us to utilize in an
24 agreement. And they kept them serviced. Just kind of like we
25 were the users; they were the owners. And then ultimately we got

1 our own stuff and all just because we realized how much -- we
2 didn't first think we were going to use those that much, but it's
3 become beneficial because of being able to talk apples to apples.

4 So, no, we've had -- like I said, we've had training over the
5 years. We've taught hazmat tech classes for the Texas Commission
6 of Fire Protection. We've done a number of classes that have
7 firefighters from the Council of Governments come in, and we've
8 had Atmos representatives come out and speak on gas, you know,
9 what's required on signages, and where -- buried lines, things --
10 all, everything that goes with that, what to look for, bubbles,
11 smells, all the stuff that new operational and even technicians
12 that may not have seen, and they have I won't say war stories, but
13 they have things to show.

14 So we've had the pipeline group come out. There's a group
15 around Dallas called the Danielle Dawn Smalley. We had a -- I
16 want to say it was explorer pipeline. They had a isobutylene, I
17 think, that blew up in Kaufman County. So they bring out stuff
18 and show all that. So it's Atmos has been there.

19 DR. JENNER: Okay, great. That's all the questions I have
20 for your involvement in this. So I'll go around the room, and see
21 if anyone has questions, follow-up questions. But I -- after we
22 do that, I'd like to get your impressions about the first two
23 incidents. And so that's part two. But let's address any follow-
24 up questions for this area.

25 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

1 Q. I had a question regarding -- because one thing I'm not clear
2 about is the decision making of the evacuations, and who from the
3 fire department was the one directly involved in that decision
4 making? Because I --

5 A. Directly involved? Because that --

6 Q. Sorry. Authorizing.

7 A. From me.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. I mean, it -- I gave authority to our commanders.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. But ultimately I pulled the trigger. I mean, I -- it's the
12 buck stops with me simply because, again, this was in conjunction
13 with information I received not only from Atmos, but also from my
14 troops. Once I had hazmat there, the more I thought about it, I
15 thought just historically based on experiences I've had over 30
16 some odd years now, I know how these things tend to escalate. And
17 I, as I alluded to earlier, I'd just as soon get a perimeter on
18 it, and then choke it back down than I would to always keep
19 playing catch up. This is kind of knowing what I know today even,
20 this is bugging me that it keeps leapfrogging in places, and I
21 can't really put my thumb on it.

22 Q. Right.

23 A. That's problematic, especially in something of this type.
24 But that's just hazmat training, as you well know. You surround
25 the troops, choke it down, and get it, like I said, put it in a

1 nice little package in a box for somebody to take care of, finish
2 the mitigation, whatever it may be.

3 Q. So --

4 A. So I did not say, you guys, right now I'm at command, you go
5 do this. That was me doing that verbally on the phone saying,
6 here's what I want you to do.

7 Q. Okay. So because Captain Combs -- Captain, right?

8 A. Um-hum.

9 Q. Yeah. He was the first one to make the -- do the 4-block
10 radius?

11 A. Correct.

12 Q. Okay. So he was -- when those evacuation decisions were
13 being discussed, he would then communicate back to you about
14 those?

15 A. He didn't communicate to me directly. These, at this time,
16 were coming from Ray O'Dell --

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. -- and coming from Lauren Johnson. So she's -- the way we do
19 our incident command, there's several little steps. But Lauren
20 was actually my go-to that I was saying here's what I need you to
21 do. Because she was on call. Therefore, I hate to say she had
22 the button, as we call it, and the button was on her. But when
23 she said 4 blocks, I said, I want to double that, and I told her
24 why. And then they're saying, well, this involves a school. And
25 I said, I understand that. Let's get up there, get readings, but

1 let's be proactive just in case.

2 Q. Right. Okay. And then, because from what I understand, on
3 Friday there was four, in total, like, decisions made for -- like
4 to constantly expand, right?

5 A. It kept going. I believe so. Yes, ma'am. And those were
6 dependent on once we had a true incident command set up.

7 Q. Right.

8 A. We start calling it a unified command because we realized
9 this is going to be bigger than what it started off as. Like I
10 said, deputy chief went home. And so I said, okay, this is going
11 to be something that's going to be drawn out so let's set up a
12 formal command here.

13 Q. Sure.

14 A. I want you all to start -- number one, we had cordoned off
15 the area to where, when people come, we're going to put them in a
16 choke point where they have to come here.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. And if they need pets, tools. I was already getting phone
19 calls, heck, before even 10:00, I got pets there. I got -- heck,
20 I had city attorneys calling me. Hey, I live over there. I have
21 a dog. Can you tell me what's going on? So it's not just them.
22 It's everybody.

23 Q. Yes.

24 A. And I know there's a lot of elderly here. Like I said, it's
25 a working community, so I knew it was really going to expand at

1 night. So that's why I was saying, let's get a handle on this,
2 get a choke point, have them funnel through that. That frustrated
3 a lot of citizens, but I think it was the right thing to do.
4 That's one reason I ordered buses to come out there because of the
5 rain, things got bad, where they could at least just get up on a
6 bus out of the weather. It wasn't to take them anywhere. It was
7 to --

8 Q. Right.

9 A. We opened up the rec center where they could get some
10 information. You all kind of heard how that worked for a while
11 and then kind of waned in the midnight hours, so to speak. So --

12 Q. So with each decision of those four would you -- they would
13 update you, and say we did this or --

14 A. Yes, ma'am.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Yeah. I'd given them carte blanche.

17 Q. Right.

18 A. I told Lauren, I said, I trust our commanders out there. I
19 knew it was Chief Clumpner. I'm very familiar with his work and I
20 know how diligent he is. Mark Combs, even though he's a captain,
21 I know how diligent he is. Lauren Johnson, outstanding. Even
22 Captain Baker, hazmat, as quirky as he is, he's very good. And
23 his troops are good.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Sometimes you got to light a fire under them, but there's a

1 lot on different shifts that have done really, really well.

2 Q. Okay. So when Atmos wanted to lift that evacuation on
3 Saturday, so Lauren was able to make that decision, say, yeah,
4 okay?

5 A. Correct.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. And, again, based on as she would even say, these are the
8 subject matter experts for this particular product. So I don't
9 want to say that. I gave them free reign to make decisions under
10 my authority on behalf of the fire chief who was gone. Of course,
11 I'm communicating things to him in North Dakota or wherever he
12 was. This whole time, everything I'm doing or they're doing, I'm
13 communicating to the city manager and mayor and our PO so he can
14 get on it. I also asked our PIO to coordinate with Atmos. He was
15 having a little trouble getting with her. I know her phone was
16 blowing up like everybody's, but making sure they're putting out
17 the same statements.

18 And I was hearing things on the radio that sounded good, but
19 in actuality they weren't occurring. And there was frustration
20 with the citizens about where do we go? Where do we stay?
21 Nobody's -- and a lot of them don't say anything because, quite
22 frankly, a lot of them are -- don't know if you want to say
23 Dreamers or whatever, but they're here and not maybe citizens.
24 And, therefore, I think that's a lot of reason a lot these calls
25 didn't come into 911 potentially. I'm just guessing. Because we

1 have seen even crimes over here they go unreported because of just
2 the fear of authorities and what may happen to me, and that's
3 unfortunate, but that's the reality.

4 Q. So you said you went to Espanola --

5 A. Espanola, yes, ma'am.

6 Q. -- on at around 11:30 a.m. that morning --

7 A. Yes, ma'am.

8 Q. -- to the actual house, and you took photos of the front.

9 A. I took a photo, one photo.

10 Q. One photo, okay. And you observed the damage there. Did you
11 interact with any Atmos people then?

12 A. No, ma'am. Like I said, I saw a, what I believe was a
13 contractor that was on that block that kind of walked up that --
14 and I just remember when he turned around he had on a safety vest.
15 I didn't talk with him, but he had a safety vest that I can still
16 see. It was kind of like a -- looked like a drilling rig. Had a
17 pole. It didn't look like an A-frame drilling platform or
18 something. It just looked like maybe an auger company or
19 something. But I can't even remember the name of it. It didn't
20 say Atmos. I just knew it was like a third-party contractor.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. And I assumed that that was an Atmos contractor, not
23 necessarily Atmos representative. But he was obviously doing
24 something at the end of the street with his crew. Like I said,
25 there were holes being punched.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. At least what I saw all over the place.

3 Q. And how long did you stay?

4 A. I was there probably an hour.

5 Q. Okay. All right. And then you went to the command post
6 after that?

7 A. I drove to the command post. I actually did not go into the
8 command post. I -- because this time we thought we had it done.
9 I was the same way. I told Mark Combs, who was the battalion
10 there, I said, I'm leaving you with this. He said Clumpner is
11 down at the command post. They've moved it together. I said,
12 great. And I said -- he said, it sounds like we're fixing to wrap
13 this up. And I said, okay, just jot -- dot your i's and cross
14 your t's. Let me know what you have. Anything changes give me a
15 call. I'm headed back to City Hall.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. And I left it with him and, like I said, that's kind of where
18 things went from there.

19 Q. Okay. And so when exactly did the mayor get involved?

20 A. This is going to sound great. City of Dallas, we are a city
21 manager run government. So the mayor is a figurehead, but he is
22 over the City Council. So just like, well, Saturday is when I
23 knew -- let me back up. Friday night I was getting some
24 information from his front man. I call him the armor bearer,
25 Scott Goldstein. He's the guy that the mayor's coming, and the

1 mayor comes in. Going to get fired after -- and he was sending me
2 notes on, hey, what's up, what's the update? What's this and
3 that? And then I want to say it was Saturday morning Scott sent
4 something that he had given my information to, I think, it was
5 Mohammed, and I guess they heard the NTSB, you all were coming,
6 which I had a hunch you all were coming anyway when this thing
7 started. It didn't end that one time.

8 The next morning I was going, okay -- that's why I got
9 dressed and came back in. It's interesting because my daughter
10 had flown in for her birthday Sunday, and we had planned all this
11 stuff. That was all kind of crapped. But that's how it happens.
12 When Ted's on call weird things happen. They're not going to let
13 me do this anymore, which has happened, they say that, and they
14 still continue. But as you can tell, I have a little problem with
15 ADD, focusing on what you asked me.

16 Q. The mayor, he --

17 A. So Scott Goldstein was how he reached out to me. I never
18 talked to the mayor directly. It was through his email to his
19 underling to me.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. There have been some times where I've talked to him on the
22 phone, not with this event. And then our assistant city manager,
23 John Fortune, after that he kind of started taking the heat off of
24 me from those higher-ups, and I started communicating everything
25 directly to him. And they were pumping us for information because

1 the City Council members in this area, Medrano and Narvaez.
2 Narvaez, I can't say that right. He -- they're, you know, they
3 were getting all kind of -- wanting updates. And then they were
4 getting reports. It was kind of like playing post office. You
5 had people that were coming up with, oh, we had a fire over here,
6 a call over here. None of that was verified, but it was
7 everything from Hidalgo, and then even all the way over off of
8 Winnetka and West Dallas. It's in his district. Councilman
9 Medrano's district, and Councilman Narvaez district are long and
10 slender, and so they run almost from downtown city, all the area
11 all the way up to the northwest side of Love Field. So this is
12 his area.

13 Q. And that was Friday night they started inquiring about --

14 A. Friday night.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Yes, sir. Actually, it really started Friday. I guess when
17 the second round of evacuations kind of started when it -- they
18 had it cordoned, and then it, I don't want to say it jumped, but
19 really when it changed was when they decided they were going to
20 have to evacuate those apartments on Bolivar, and I think it's
21 called Bolivar Place and Over the Rainbow or something, and that
22 was 200 and some units. And we were, like, oh, goodness, here we
23 go. And then we get that kind of contained, and the next morning,
24 I guess, it jumped to -- and I may have my times off on that, but
25 it jumped to the other side of Marsh to the couple of streets that

1 are kind of parallel or linear in line with Espanola and Durango.
2 It's the other side, but it's a little bit south, I think, or
3 west, I guess that would be.

4 Q. All right. Okay.

5 A. Yeah. So mayor is a figurehead, city manager runs it. You
6 know, council members, people, press wearing you out. So it was
7 just trying to get everything even on our end wrapped up and
8 figured out and -- and that's why, you know, I don't want to sound
9 like I'm kicking Atmos because I'm going to kick ourselves too as
10 far as the fire department, but I knew there was a dark period.
11 There literally was a dark period where maybe they thought it was
12 down turning. Maybe we all did. I know we did. And then I think
13 they got their game legs back up under them, and kind of going
14 from there.

15 Q. Friday, was it raining then?

16 A. It was kind of like it's doing right now, misting and
17 raining. We had rain that came in really hard, I want to say
18 around 7:30. That's why I was glad -- we had some cold weather so
19 that's why I was glad we had buses out there just because at that
20 time we had people lined up trying to get in.

21 There's a lot of frustration over that. People were going to
22 the various, I don't want to say checkpoints, but barricades, and
23 then being routed all the way around to that northwest, west
24 corner where the command post was so they could feed in from
25 there. So, and at that time I was asked, what do we let them do?

1 And I said, all I want to do is allow them to get their pets, any
2 necessary medicines, and if there's any -- something of
3 significance. It's not to go get your clothes and cousin's toys
4 and all that. Because I was thinking of the pure volume of how
5 many people that would be.

6 Something else that I had told the Chief Johnson, I said get
7 with our shop, which is where our maintenance facility is, and get
8 their extra Suburbans that we have in reserve. Bring those out
9 there where we can pony people in, not have to -- I even thought
10 about, and I didn't -- I spoke with Mark Combs when I was at the
11 scene saying you think I need to get our all terrain vehicles in
12 here? We have those Gators that can run up and down. Because of
13 the alleys, I didn't know where a people had houses. A lot of
14 these have been cut up and redone. And he said, I don't think
15 we're going to be here that long. I said, okay, because I was
16 already thinking long term streets being closed because the dirt
17 and stuff. We can get over that a lot easier than a Suburban.
18 And I knew there's a lot of elderly that we weren't going to be
19 able just to walk up to their house. So that's kind of the
20 thought process. But I didn't intend on it to be a -- at least in
21 my mind a extended, let me go get my socks and underwear and 15
22 different garments and --

23 Q. Last question for this. Did you -- have you ever seen
24 something similar? Like have you ever seen an incident like this?

25 A. Yes, ma'am.

1 Q. Similar to the Friday incident?

2 A. Yes, ma'am. I've seen houses pop. I've seen -- I've been on
3 deployments up in -- we've had some in Garland. We had some in
4 McKinney. I've been on Task Force 1 when we had, heck, Katrina
5 and Rita. We had gas lines blowing and stuff everywhere. I --
6 yes, ma'am. I've seen stuff like that all over.

7 Q. Okay. So it wasn't really a surprise like?

8 A. Not to me, no.

9 Q. All right.

10 A. I mean, when I got there, you know, I'm listening to what's
11 going on. When I got there, there was no doubt in my mind that we
12 had had a gas explosion.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Just due to the lack of fire damage. There was none. And
15 what I had seen of an implosion/explosion inside. It wasn't
16 imploded. It was pushed out. And just the force of the debris
17 and things. It -- no doubt to my mind.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. And that's what, like I said, that's one reason I came to the
20 scene when I'm -- all the things I was telling you, I had kind of
21 checklist in my head. That morning on Friday I was asking
22 dispatch to run me some reports over what was -- been in that area
23 related to that. Because when I heard explosion, I was thinking
24 was it a fire or what? Then when I start seeing, well, they had a
25 couple other fires.

1 And so on the fire side, I'm already making mental notes
2 going why wouldn't A plus B equal C, kind of put together in this
3 area. And then do we have several different companies? Which
4 happened. I see who is answering what. Are they not
5 communicating? Are we not getting a picture of that? You start
6 having clusters, just like with fire fatalities, you go, okay, why
7 am I having so many here?

8 I've seen that -- you know, when I got over to arson we had
9 -- (indiscernible) we had a area northwest of Dallas up off Odellia
10 and all that I noticed we had a lot of geriatric fatalities in
11 probably a 10-block area. And I did some more investigation,
12 chased it down. Well, all those homes were built in the late
13 '70s. A lot of them have aluminum wiring. They had Federal
14 Pacific fuse panels that had been recalled, and most of that area
15 are retired and geriatric, actually widows, and having fires at
16 night and unable to get out. And so we were able to go in the
17 neighborhood, do a home safety and do some checks and things.

18 So but you look for clusters of why. Things don't just
19 -- you don't have things like this that just happen, and go, oh,
20 God's green earth. That's what happened.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. There's a reason.

23 Q. All right, thank you.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No questions.

25 MR. PADGETT: 20 minutes. I went too far.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't have any.

2 MR. PADGETT: Oh, good. Look at that.

3 DR. JENNER: Tell you what. Why don't we take a 5, 10-minute
4 break, and we'll regroup.

5 (Off the record.)

6 (On the record.)

7 DR. JENNER: We're back on the record.

8 BY DR. JENNER:

9 Q. Okay. You've been a group member in the last couple of days
10 in several interviews, and you've heard what we've heard, and as
11 much as you're comfortable with, we'd like to go back and get your
12 -- sort of your opinion and your impression of the two other
13 incidents that are sort of related to this. And there's one that
14 occurred on February 21st and one on February 22nd. So I'll just
15 throw it over to you.

16 A. Okay.

17 Q. About the February 21st incident, and based on what you've
18 learned, and what's your take away from all that?

19 A. Well, as chief of staff, my job again is to always look for
20 needs and improvements and things that maybe we need to shore up
21 on our end as far as fire and rescue. So I'll start with that.
22 Based on what I saw -- can we hang on one second? Take this from
23 Chief --

24 (Off the record.)

25 (On the record.)

1 MR. PADGETT: All right, so we're back.

2 DR. JENNER: We're back.

3 MR. PADGETT: We're fixing to get jukebox (indiscernible) out
4 of the way, so you can't go wrong, play your song here on WTOP.
5 Dallas area weather today partly cloudy 20 percent chance of rain.
6 Overnight low 43, high today 65 and damp.

7 Back to -- the ADD issue, squirrel. So what I have seen
8 related to the fire department, as I stated earlier, I asked our
9 dispatch, our communications to go back and pull runs that are
10 kicked out by our computer assisted dispatch, CAD. To go back and
11 research CAD, and find me codes that we roll on that are gas
12 leaks, gas in the area, investigations, fires in this parameter.
13 And off the top of my head, I want to say -- I've got some PDS of
14 that now, but I want to say there's been -- and I had them run
15 that back to Friday, I believe, the 16th, if that's right. And so
16 essentially I went back a week, and I want to say I had 12 hits,
17 11 or 12. I say that. I'd have to count but on the top of my
18 head. And they ranged everything from a gas smell to some fires
19 to the three in particular that you're asking me about.

20 BY DR. JENNER:

21 Q. And I'm sorry. Just what time period did you go --

22 A. I went back to -- I asked them to roll back to Friday, I
23 believe, it was February 16th. I think that's the exact week from
24 Friday, wasn't it? Yeah. Friday was the 23rd. So, yeah. And
25 CAD came back with -- this area that we had highlighted came back

1 with -- and, again, this is off the top of my head, 11 or 12
2 incidents, including the 2 that you had -- that actually were on
3 Durango behind the house on Friday.

4 So this is where I shifted into my arson investigator mode.
5 So I'm thinking, what would I do? And so when you ask me, I'm
6 being introspective here. Number one, I need to reprioritize the
7 fact that hazmat rolls on unknowns and gas leaks of any
8 consequence. They can always be turned around by the companies,
9 if you know Atmos is there, and I hate to say it, if it's a meter
10 in the back alley or something that -- not that that's
11 insignificant, but that can be handled better than a full-scale.
12 Atmos knows what they're doing. And I think some of our troops
13 have just assumed -- you know, so we have protocols for that.

14 I made a note to actually make sure that we get that pounded
15 home. Because something I may not have said on the record, but
16 City of Dallas, we lose around 80, 85 firefighters a year. We
17 have close to 2,000. I think our authorized strength is 2163 to
18 be exact. But this past year we've lost a little over 260 in the
19 last calendar year, and our -- excuse me -- fiscal year. Our
20 calendar year, as of January, we're already 65 in the hole, and
21 it's typically because of some changes on the pension and an older
22 fire crew.

23 So we've had a number of promotions lately. So as you all
24 have maybe seen, we have a lot of new captains, new deputies, new
25 chiefs, a lot of youngers that are coming up, and the olders are

1 kind of rotating out. Firefighting is not a young man or a young
2 woman's job for sure. So if you're out there on the rig and
3 climbing ladders and stuff it's difficult. So I don't know.
4 We've been doing a lot of officer in-service training. So this is
5 something that needs to come up on things that are outside of
6 normal fire calls and EMS calls. I'm very confident they can
7 handle that, but hazmat and USAR and swift water and things are --
8 and this just as a teaching point that hazmat -- whether they'd
9 have made a difference or not, I don't know, but on the initial
10 call that I was aware of Friday, I think they should have been
11 there and not turned back.

12 Now the second part is, I'm a little -- and I'll be honest,
13 I'm a little disappointed and irritated that the arson
14 investigators, their job is to determine origin and cause, and
15 they utilized a legalese, if you will, to say undetermined on a
16 couple fires that happened on Durango, which is proper, but in my
17 opinion they're paid to make decisions and they have the knowledge
18 to make decisions. And it seemed that they did everything but say
19 it was this or that. And, again, I can't get in their head and
20 say that, but based on the interviews and what I've heard and what
21 I have read, there's no doubt in my mind that we had an issue with
22 gas. And, therefore, it should have -- the pieces should have
23 been put together potentially sooner.

24 And I will even say that based on -- and I can't tell you who
25 I had the conversation with, but we had -- Atmos has had crews out

1 here, whether they were replacing some lines or whatnot, at least
2 that I know of Sunday or Monday prior to the fire. So that would
3 have been around the 17th, maybe 18th. Because I thought it was
4 odd that, well, it's a city holiday -- Presidents Day, I think,
5 was the 18th -- and they had crews that were out in this area.

6 So a good arson investigator will do a canvass of the
7 neighborhood. What's going on? Here's kind of the stuff. And I
8 think they thought it was a routine fire. It wasn't. We had a
9 back end burned out. We have a lot of fires every day. I mean, I
10 say a lot literally, and a lot of them are single-frame residence
11 like this, and you're kind of in and out. And I think they got --
12 in my opinion, they got complacent, maybe not individually, but as
13 collectively as a whole, that they didn't share the information.

14 I know I heard one of the arson investigators, Captain
15 Westbrook, say -- I heard the Friday thing comment. I thought,
16 oh, yeah, I've had a fire over there, and I told such and such.
17 Well, especially not that they're short staffed, and they got
18 younger crews there, I would think they would be communicating
19 even more because a lot of them are doing double shifts and
20 things, and they should be able to put those pieces together.
21 Maybe I'm wrong on that, but I know historically the arson
22 investigators, every day they get up and they pull the evening
23 runs that they were not dispatched on, maybe car fires because we
24 have a lot of insurance claims. A lot of people dump cars here
25 and burn. So we're always having cases that we're working because

1 the insurance agencies and all.

2 And lot of counties around this don't investigate car fires.
3 People don't know that. But they come to Dallas and all of a
4 sudden because we have the paying entities that are in the city of
5 Dallas, it becomes our case. And so we have a lot of cases, arson
6 cases working. Very proud of their clearance rate. But in this
7 case, I guess since it wasn't arson, it was kind of -- you know,
8 maybe that's not important. I don't know. I do know that needs
9 to be drilled home: I need more communication sharing and
10 information sharing between the respective arson investigators.

11 I will tell you that Chief Coatney and, I since this has
12 occurred, have had personal discussions of putting firefighters
13 paired with arson investigators in the thought process to make
14 them arson investigators, just to give more tools to the existing
15 young people we have over there. Because firefighters are well
16 versed in building construction. They're well versed in --
17 typically have a working knowledge, let me put it that way, of
18 electrical, gas, things of that nature. Whereas, I didn't feel
19 like I heard that from the arson investigators that we heard from.
20 They may know that. I didn't feel like that was expressed. I
21 felt like you got more detail from the officers that are in the
22 field than you did from those that really should have more
23 details, with the exception of a few.

24 I thought Rene Molina was very good at what he did. His job
25 was interviewing and getting questions. I thought he asked

1 pertinent questions and pointed questions, and had good answers
2 for that, but that was the extent. It was like the military.
3 This is my lane, I'm not getting out either side. This is what I
4 was tasked to do, I did it. And he's very good at that. At his
5 current rank, he's not allowed to be the lead investigator. Rank
6 sometime -- I don't know, anyway.

7 So that needs to be looked at, the dynamics of that, and how
8 we do things. And even our promotional of their career path as
9 inspectors, code enforcement officers, fire marshals and then into
10 arson. I'm not sure that's the best path to go. A lot of cities
11 do that. Apparently Dallas has done it for years. I just feel
12 like as a firefighter, I know when I got over there as an arson
13 investigator, I was, you know, the first non-fire code guy that
14 came over there I had to learn all this. But lot of stuff that it
15 took them a long time to learn was just natural for a firefighter.
16 I mean, you see and process things without even realizing you're
17 doing it. So that was the second thing that I noticed.

18 I also wanted to, since we have new chiefs -- I know I made
19 some notes. I wanted to have a chiefs training. They already
20 have task books for those that are coming up. And I wanted -- I
21 don't know, little more maybe ownership of incidents and following
22 up instead of just coming back. And I don't know if they do this,
23 but kind of, you know, putting your feet up, and waiting on the
24 next call. Because in the fire service, we don't have the luxury
25 of making excuses or mistakes, quite frankly. And whether -- I

1 don't want to say mistakes, but some things were -- or some
2 oversight that didn't get done or some follow-ups that I think in
3 the best case would have occurred on the fire side.

4 Because I made some notes about how they make decisions.
5 Some things are planned, and other things are automatic. I want
6 them to be automatic where they're trained on things. You've
7 heard that from some of the officers we had, some of the others,
8 maybe not. Just the who, what, why, I thought that should have
9 been done under arson investigators.

10 I had a note here about leadership. Everybody's got a bad
11 day, but I wrote fix the problem. Don't become complacent and
12 quit or just that's not mine; I'll go home today, punch a clock.
13 It's fix it. I want everybody to take on that role. So lot of it
14 has to do with leadership. I won't get into all that.

15 Has to do with expectations. I wrote a note here that I have
16 expectations from whether it's the person you're riding with in
17 the rig as an officer, what they have for you, the person in the
18 jump seat next to you, from your driver, your assistant on the
19 fire scene, from that officer, even what that officer expects from
20 his crew, and what we as command expect from our subordinates to
21 come from us. There's no gray line in our job, and I wrote that
22 in here. We have protocols, MOPs and SOPs for a reason. They're
23 not there just when we get in trouble to go look, but it needs to
24 be studied. And so that's something -- that's part of what I said
25 about acting versus reacting, planned and automatic. That needs

1 to be second family.

2 It's important as a leader, I said I want -- some of these
3 that I saw did not have -- and maybe I don't have that, did not
4 have a command presence. I had notes that I wrote that it's -- as
5 a leader you always look to have that command presence. And I
6 feel like when everything, as I stated, is kind of going to pot,
7 it's my job to be the steady rock, and kind of -- and I've been
8 blessed. God's blessed me when things are flying, everything kind
9 of slows down for me, and I -- just tells you how old I am, I go
10 to a Rolodex in my head, you know, kind of seen that, done that.
11 Here, it's going here. Or never seen that, let me write that
12 down. But it's all about being easy going, remaining positive,
13 confident, in control at all times.

14 Some of our arson personnel came across with that persona,
15 but I think that was a guise because I don't think there's a lot
16 of depth there. Even what's their confidence level, and what --
17 and their comfort level at what they do? I had a note there. How
18 -- that's something else. Our arson people, I want them to get
19 their curriculum vitae, however you say that, get that listed.
20 Because some of them came in here, and they said I did this or
21 this. I think it's important for them to be able to punch to
22 their training records or whatever it is.

23 There's a lot of stuff I'll provide for you all for the
24 people that have asked, hazmat and things like that. But that
25 ought to be something, because maybe they have never testified in

1 court, but I have for a number of things, and that's something
2 they're going to dig into, and it's important to get it out there
3 and then make yourself a -- hate that word -- subject matter
4 expert, but you can at least be confident in what you're doing,
5 and know that you've done it right.

6 They should also know -- going back to arson. I was amazed
7 that none of them told about the scientific method and how they --
8 I heard them talk about we go from least burned to most burned.
9 And maybe they knew that, but I think it was imperative for them
10 to delineate the steps on how they do investigations, and had they
11 had followed that, in my opinion, they would have come to these
12 conclusions that I think were glaringly obvious, at least in my
13 mind. So maybe they need to brush up on their deal.

14 A whole list of notes here. I'm sorry. Everybody is
15 accountable for the action of their subordinates, and this
16 includes everything starts and ends with you. It's just like I've
17 told our officers, I can only control what I can control. But as
18 I alluded to earlier, I trust everybody. There are some people
19 that have taken so many withdrawals that I have to verify
20 everything they say. And I alluded to that earlier, I feel the
21 same way with a lot of contractors and vendors and/or in this case
22 Atmos. I trust what they say, but I want to verify just because
23 I'm making decisions not just for Ted, but for basically 2100
24 firefighters in the city in that particular case.

25 We have a breakdown on communications. We have a lot of

1 things going in different areas, and not really explaining why or
2 what on both sides, but with our fire operations personnel and our
3 arson personnel, and even command staff. It just goes back to the
4 three C's, and I jotted them here, clear, concise and confirmed.
5 I always want to make sure that they heard that because they --
6 kind of like this center here on Grundy, I had OEM, Kevin Oden,
7 which I know is a great guy, said, yeah, I got it. Okay. I
8 didn't worry about that because Kevin's always been Johnny on the
9 spot.

10 But then when I -- Lauren and I were here sitting there doing
11 twiddle thumbs, I called Ms. Ross, who is department
12 representative. She works downtown. I said -- she goes, well,
13 our people don't show up until 9. I said, well, didn't Kevin call
14 you? Yeah, but he never really gave me a time; I didn't know.
15 So, again, got to confirm that, all right, you told me you got --
16 I have people here at such and such time. Just like yesterday.
17 And obviously they moved us from here to there. That happened
18 just by somebody here, but I was told B. I didn't know they had
19 the Roxy jumpers or whatever doing their EMS or flip-flopping.

20 So SOPs, making sure everything is standardized. I wrote in
21 here is it lack of experience or training? If it's training,
22 that's my obligation. If it's -- if they're on the job, it's
23 their obligation. But I offered it to them because fire and death
24 and all that, that's not stupid; firefighters are, but we can
25 learn.

1 Some of the signs, I don't know if -- just one thing I think
2 in the history of this department that has changed, but when I
3 came on, rookies and nozzle men/women, were to be on the line and
4 not to speak about anything they saw or whatever. You pass that
5 through your chain of command. You don't even talk unless I talk
6 to you. That's old school. And all the companies I have
7 throughout -- we have a rank structure for a reason. Take the
8 hits, but they also get the glory when it's something they've done
9 right. But everybody that worked for me knew they can speak
10 freely, and I don't take offense to that. I learn just as well as
11 anybody, but I expect them -- because that's the only way they're
12 going to learn, and lot of times they'll see things that maybe I
13 don't see as an incident commander.

14 I heard Horacio Garcia here saying, did you see Atmos running
15 around in the back? Well, all he knew was the guy came back and
16 said the gas was off. Well, I also knew that Mark Combs, that's
17 the first thing the truck company captain does. He went -- when
18 he thought he had gas, he cut the gas off himself. That's why the
19 Atmos guy didn't take too long. He went around, probably
20 verified, yeah, it's off, did his thing, came around. But
21 Horacio, like he said, I got a lot of other things going on.
22 Well, in this particular case he had already -- I got ambulances.
23 I got this and that. What else was there, other than following
24 some steps and clearing up and getting back? So I want to make
25 sure that everybody is on the page with what their

1 responsibilities are for the various rank structures. Because the
2 buck does stop with them. And we have people, public, industry,
3 whoever, looking at us, and even your own personnel that are
4 going, okay, I want to be like that, I don't want to be like that.

5 And so I think we should have picked up on the gas odor calls
6 in the neighborhood, number of calls just from these stations that
7 answered. They work with each other so much, I think there should
8 have been something like that.

9 The utility notifications on the fire alarms, we call them
10 boxes, that has been being made. Maybe that needs to be an
11 automatic, and then we can turn them back around. Because I know
12 in this case Atmos or even Encore they don't run Code 3. So lot
13 of times we're still fighting fire with lines arcing and gas
14 going, things. And that's one reason we do carry gas tools.
15 That's a little easier to take care of. We can find a meter at
16 industrial park or whatever. We're shutting off everything we
17 have.

18 Gas meters, we at one time had them on all our chiefs cars.
19 We still now do. I didn't hear a battalion chief, one, say that
20 they utilized -- they have 4-gas meters on there specifically for
21 incidents like this, and/or overhaul where they can come in and --
22 you know, we put in specially gas meters for carbon monoxide.
23 Obviously that's standard on 4-gas, but also for hydrogen cyanide
24 for after overhaul activities, just because of the influx of
25 cancer and other problems. I didn't hear any of them say that.

1 At one time we pulled them off all the rigs. We had them on
2 engines and stuff. They were never being used. We had people
3 that were pulling 4-gas meters thinking it was a methane detector.
4 And we had -- hazmat has the PIDs because methane is up on that
5 higher scale on the ionization potential. So they have the
6 special bulbs. I think it's an 11-7. Most of them run with a 10-
7 3 or something, and that can see pretty much everything except
8 those higher ends. But none of that was utilized. I didn't hear
9 that.

10 They may have carbon monoxide detectors, and I have seen even
11 when I've ridden out in the field just to stay up, crews pull
12 things off, and I go, why are you taking that in? Oh, yeah, we
13 got a gas leak. You taking carbon monoxide in because you think
14 maybe we got carbon monoxide buildup? And then they'll realize,
15 yeah, that's why I'm doing it. And that's fine. Because carbon
16 monoxide lot of times when gas is out -- it's kind of like I was
17 concerned, I still am, what's going on in the neighborhood is the
18 minute we let them back in their house, if they don't have gas and
19 it's going to be cold tonight, they're going to cook one way or
20 the other. And I've seen everything from charcoal in the house to
21 bringing in their turkey fryer or whatever and using propane
22 tanks, and carbon monoxide goes out the door. And we've had
23 issues with that.

24 Matter of fact, one of those calls that has happened recently
25 was a carbon monoxide off of one of the streets north of here.

1 And I think it might have been because they turned something off,
2 and I don't know, I didn't follow up on that in particular. I
3 just noticed that the other day.

4 All right. I think there should have been a better sketch of
5 the home and layout, and I'm hoping that when I get the arson
6 reports that they will have better layouts on the individual
7 structures. One of the structures, the one on Friday, I
8 understand, because it was compromised that they weren't
9 comfortable going in. Again, that goes back to understanding
10 building construction. But the other two, in my opinion, there
11 wasn't an excuse.

12 I am dismayed that -- a heater doesn't just miracle itself
13 out of the world. I've heard that come up. No one knows where
14 that is. If the individual didn't have fragmentation on him, a
15 heater didn't just dissolve itself. I mean, if it's a typical,
16 and making assumption, space heater that was in the wall, gas fed
17 from the '50s and '60s like they were, I should see some ceramic
18 debris. I should see some, you know, some of the braiding that's
19 in there. I should see some of -- even the vermiculite blocks
20 that are in there to keep the -- I should see that somewhere. A
21 good arson investigator should have chased that down.

22 I heard them describe the bathroom and this, that and the
23 other, but I don't know where it is. And they said everything is
24 up on the roof. You get a ladder set off a truck. Even if you're
25 using a arrow you don't have to get in the structure. Get up

1 there and get a picture. But, again, this was a, quote/unquote,
2 routine fire. So that's something.

3 I want every one of our arson investigators, I want the
4 ignition source determined. And the way to do that -- I didn't
5 hear any of them say I ruled out all the possible -- when you have
6 an undetermined, that also means you've ruled out every other
7 possible alternative or -- I get our protocol here is if you have
8 a fatality they'll leave it undetermined just by the chance -- in
9 this case, I think it was very obvious. They said the person had
10 no obvious external injuries, little cuts and scrapes, but the
11 young lady on Friday died from the concussion wave of a blast. It
12 just tore up her insides. And she was a little petite thing, so
13 that was reasonable. And I heard -- I didn't know that, but the
14 protection, the fact there was no wall there from where the, I
15 assume, water heater was, et cetera. I don't know.

16 So I also heard, and I wrote this quote down from one of our
17 arson investigators that they said this was the third incident in
18 that area so I paid more attention. I wrote that down as a quote.
19 That's concerning to me because you should be paying more
20 attention to everything if that's the case. I need -- we're going
21 to get that. Talked about the layouts, photos, interior sketches,
22 just case files, you know, just origin and cause. I hate to keep
23 pounding on that, but --

24 Understanding fire dynamics from arson investigators, even
25 firefighters on what flames mean. I heard no opinion a lot of

1 times. Okay. They're asking you for your opinion, you have an
2 opinion, good, bad, indifferent. That's how we learn. And I
3 heard an arson investigator say that they couldn't take pictures
4 or they did take pictures, I heard both, because the ground was
5 all snowed up. Meaning, we had foam on-site. That foam
6 dissipates after a while. That's their job as an arson
7 investigator to maintain the scene until you get what you need,
8 and then you can release it.

9 Oh, just food for thought. For our department, we had a
10 breach in our battalion chief's MDCs. You kind of heard that. So
11 we had a period where, like Scott Clumpner, they were going into
12 this fire blind, didn't have all the data lot of times they have.
13 We had just had that on Wednesday. So we had a malware that got
14 into some of the battalion chiefs here on their mobile computers
15 just because they used a generic password. They got hacked. And
16 that was a case in point that firefighters will run through that
17 wall for you, but they're not the smartest knives in the drawer.
18 It' just easy to just -- "Station 35" or "password" or whatever it
19 is, you know, a third grader could hack into this stuff.

20 So we've -- just a note for us. We've gotten with our
21 communication information services and made sure that that's been
22 shored up. Changed passwords and things, and given new edicts on
23 that. But I heard that kind of come into play with Scott. It
24 didn't impact his decision making, but he was not able to see
25 normally what he would see, comments or maybe some old calls.

1 There's a lot of information that gets pushed out to them on the
2 mobile data terminals, and that's on all of our rigs.

3 I was very pleased with the fire officers that you did
4 interview. I thought they were -- I won't say rock stars, but I
5 thought they explained everything that they did very well. It was
6 a logical progression, systematic with what they were doing. A
7 lot of them told you I've never seen this before, that's to be
8 explained, but I thought even based on those circumstances did
9 very well. And to a T most of them said I'm relying on Atmos
10 because they're the subject matter experts. We encourage that.
11 If there's something that you're not sure about or you don't have
12 personal knowledge of, you still put that in the back of your
13 head, but you follow what's here. They did that to a point all
14 the way through.

15 I think we've learned here that it's not over till it's over.
16 I realized how many other city entities have been involved.
17 There's been parks, DART, PIOs, streets. Even to the point where,
18 I guess, it was Saturday when I got called, and heard people were
19 going back in their house unescorted, and that was one thing I
20 remember telling Captain Combs is that I wanted some of those
21 street barricades there. And we had police there. That that
22 house wasn't to be entered, just because of the structural
23 integrity. And the I hear -- it's kind of like when people think
24 we're leaving, street comes picks up their barricades. I need
25 this back on the shelf, and this looks good here, so let's go.

1 And so maybe it's good to communicate to whoever they may be that
2 you don't pull anything off until the fire department comes to you
3 and says we're out of here 100 percent. That's some more
4 communications. Okay. So that's fire department. That's a lot.

5 On the other side, I felt as I alluded to earlier, and I'm
6 not trying to kick anybody. I'm just being honest here, because
7 I've poked our own self in the eye. I felt like as I've stated it
8 took Atmos a while to get on top of this. I understand the
9 contacts I had, they weren't meant to be the down and dirty on the
10 scene, but the people that our troops spoke with on the scene, a
11 lot of them were contractors and didn't really have -- you know,
12 who am I reporting to? They probably know where to get their
13 paycheck from, but they don't know who is the Grand Puba. And so
14 it may have been that that dark period was just them trying to get
15 up. But I need to reiterate I need somebody that's at my hip to
16 be able to answer questions whether from myself or underlings.

17 I thought that Atmos is doing outstanding now. I felt that
18 they had dropped the ball probably just due to fatigue and the
19 lack of personnel with the public relations aspect coming out of
20 the gate. The fact that we had this center open here, and it --
21 they kind of just handed it to Red Cross and walked away as far as
22 the PR part. Now I know the troops are out there working, but we
23 had a public that had all kind of questions and answers they
24 wanted. I didn't have those to give them. The City Manager
25 didn't have those to give them because I wasn't given anything,

1 and I wasn't getting anything from Atmos. And I didn't want to
2 burn Atmos in the press, and say we're not getting anything from
3 them. And I'm telling you all that in here because these have
4 been very good partners at least in my tenure. So we all have had
5 days, and like I said, I felt like it was just a while for them to
6 get up to speed on what's going on.

7 I'm not sure that I was given the whole truth from the start.
8 That bothers me because I think it was much bigger or they had an
9 assumption it was much bigger because of the amount of work I saw
10 going on prior to the event being -- the event I call as Friday.
11 They didn't just dig those holes an hour before I got there.
12 There was a lot of work going on in a big area prior to Friday.
13 So whether that was planned pipeline change-outs, I don't know. I
14 just think it's awful convenient. Let's put it that way.

15 I admire Atmos because this is poking them in the eye really
16 for taking care of these people, putting them in hotels. It
17 probably -- some of them have never been in before. It's probably
18 nicer digs than they've ever had. But they're doing everything
19 they can to take care of them, and so I applaud them for that.

20 They've been very forthright with information since. And
21 that's being filtered in different ways. It's still, like
22 anything of this magnitude, which just started as a little mole
23 hill and now it's big, there's all kind of things to fix on the
24 communications side. Getting ahead of it, as I stated, I've
25 learned that over the years. Just getting the press and the PR

1 groups together, and then getting them on your side to pump out
2 information is a lot better than invoking what sells. And I said
3 earlier, if you have a picture of a dog and the Pope and something
4 about a fire, that's going to be the evening news. And around
5 here, especially when people -- English is not their first
6 language, and I'm using that just kind of generically -- that's
7 troublesome. Because now it's just what I know is word of mouth,
8 and what you're telling me, by the time it gets around there is
9 something worse.

10 So I think we were very lucky both -- everyone involved that
11 we had one fatality, and luckily not any super serious injuries.
12 I mean, we had people injured, we had people burned, but the fact
13 that we lost a life, little bit here or there that may not have
14 occurred, that's going to bother me just because I'm wondering
15 what on the fire department's side could we have done to prevent
16 that.

17 Other entities. I think the police department has been very
18 responsive, as they always are. That's one thing here in Dallas
19 I'm proud of. Police and fire work together real well. DART,
20 Parks Department, the city managers up top, they all have
21 different specialties. Our city manager that we deal with --
22 assistant city manager, he deals with police, fire, the criminal
23 court system and the Office of Emergency Management. So we had a
24 handle on knowing who we are. It's always good to put faces with
25 names. And I think this is an experience that you've heard it

1 works.

2 Kind of like Captain Baker said, something I've always
3 believed in, that's why I've told them kind of go forth and
4 prosper, you build those relations before things happen. That way
5 you know when you're hearing something from someone that you know
6 you don't have to sit there and go what's this guy all about or
7 what's this girl all about or what's their angle? You just take
8 what they're saying and go. And like I said, if something comes
9 out of that where it's different, that's when I go back to that I
10 got to verify. And that's why, and this is not reflective of the
11 current management of Atmos, but even back Lone Star days, Lone
12 Star Gas days, we -- I used to have guys that would come out and
13 just jump down in there with their blue jeans and Wrangler boots
14 and work on a line. I'm getting readings that are just
15 astronomical, we're all in bunker gear.

16 And then years ago, we had a explosion on Eads and Eight
17 Street over in south Dallas, and burned one of the Atmos guys. I
18 guess actually it was Lone Star then, I think. Burned him up
19 pretty good. Actually, I think, he ended up dying. And from then
20 on they're always wearing Nomex and all their protective gear. So
21 it takes something to change, but people, kind of like little
22 kids, they just kind of keep -- okay, I don't need this, I don't
23 need this.

24 So what can we fix? Lots of things. Fire department has got
25 a lot of shoring up to do; MOPs, training records. I'm very proud

1 of the fact that we do have a lot of toys and a lot of things to
2 bring to the party. I feel like some of those were not utilized
3 here in a timely fashion. But overall I'm happy with what we did.
4 We can always improve, everybody. And that comes through
5 communication and making sure that we know what the focus is. I
6 think that's about it.

7 Q. Great. Really appreciate that.

8 A. That was a lot.

9 Q. Right. I just want to hit on just a couple things that you
10 didn't mention. And we, of course, we've only interviewed on the
11 fire and rescue side. We haven't interviewed any on the gas
12 company side. But from what you've heard so far in the interviews
13 and in other venues, how was the -- at least for the first two
14 incidents, how do you rate the communication between the gas
15 company and the fire department and arson?

16 A. I don't have personal knowledge of that. So, again, I'm
17 going to make an assumption, and you know how that works. But it
18 sounded like it was routine typically like we have. Now I don't
19 want to put words in anyone's mouth, but in my mind, and you're
20 asking me my opinion, I think there were some balls dropped on
21 both sides. I think there was communication from the parties that
22 were there, maybe the worker bees together, but nobody kind of --
23 I'm sure -- well, I know for a fact on our side a lot of the same
24 and then different and nobody really put pieces together. The one
25 thing that was constant was Atmos is a company, fire department is

1 a company, we were both there. Now why pieces weren't put
2 together, I don't know.

3 But communication, that's always a problem. So can I say
4 that was great? No. Obviously, in retrospect things could maybe
5 be followed up a little better. It looks like we had this. Was
6 it on the homeowner's end or was it something you're doing? Maybe
7 if there -- and I'm not saying there was -- if there was some
8 knowledge beforehand by in this case Atmos that there's something
9 else that was a little hinky, that should have been shared with at
10 least the higher-ups.

11 Kind of like I'll use this analogy. When the police
12 department when their drug crews are doing a raid, they will reach
13 out to a commander in the fire service, keep tight lip -- you just
14 don't want it to get out, and we'll stand by it. So if it's
15 something like that, hey, if you got something going, you can tell
16 us on the down-low. We don't need to put it out in the wind for
17 the public. But some of the higher-ups may need to know that we
18 may have something here, and we could have maybe figured out a way
19 to work that a little better, hand-in-hand. I'm not saying that's
20 the case here, but in retrospect I think we could have some pieces
21 put together on both sides.

22 Q. Okay. With the advantage of retrospect and hindsight, are
23 you convinced or your opinion that each of the first two incidents
24 was gas related?

25 A. There's no doubt in my mind, no. Based on what I heard it's

1 a common denominator. And just the proximity. Like I said, I
2 haven't reviewed all of the 11 or 12 of the calls that were just
3 for that week. That's a pretty good indicator that there's
4 something that's out of whack. Because unless there's a -- just
5 like last night, a contractor that's maybe putting in some
6 fiberoptic or something and the line gets hit. You know, the one
7 last night was a 6-inch line. That's a good size line. There's a
8 lot of pressure on that. That happens a lot all over the city
9 with the growth. And we have people that are contracted to put in
10 -- heck, we've had city workers to hit lines that have been there.
11 Or maybe some old plats will show this, and actually the line is
12 over here.

13 That's one thing I've learned in my years here in Texas is
14 it's not like where I grew up. This clay soil down here, it goes
15 up and down, expands and contracts, and you can bury something 4,
16 5 feet down, and the next week it's up at the top. It blows my
17 mind how that happens. So that may have just been the case here
18 with all the rain and cold. And then we went from 20 degrees one
19 day literally to the next day it was 78. That's a lot of up and
20 down. So that's to be expected.

21 And that's why in my opinion polyethylene and the modern
22 piping systems are much better than the old ductile iron and cast
23 pipe and all the other things they just shoved in there just to
24 figure it out. So and that's the problem. This neighborhood is
25 old.

1 Q. Okay. And again with the advantage of hindsight just after
2 the first incident, if things went perfectly the way you would
3 have wanted them to go, was there enough information there to be
4 concerned and sort of put out a communication with the gas company
5 that you have something significant here?

6 A. I don't think so. And I say that because of this. Because
7 we have incidents involving a flash or a fire in a house that
8 occurs for who knows what reasons, and it is not by fault of any
9 provider. Maybe user error. Maybe I thought I had the pilot
10 light on or a fan blew the pilot out or something. Who knows. Or
11 I thought I had clicked it, and the igniter didn't come on. I
12 answered a phone call, and then we had some pop.

13 So one -- but then when you say that to me you've got to look
14 at the totality of everything that was around in that area. So if
15 I'm an officer on the rig, and I'm on my p's and q's, which again
16 one time to me is not out of the ordinary. So my ears really
17 don't perk up on that. Had it been a fatality, yes, you start
18 digging. Fatalities we -- or significant serious injury, which
19 I'm not downplaying a second degree burn, but the -- when you say
20 explosion and a roof is gone and things, that doesn't make sense.
21 So you go, okay, what's the common denominator?

22 So I would have been well served, I think, from our officers
23 to kind of -- they know that district. What's different today
24 that wasn't the other week? Oh, I see. Looks like the -- holes
25 where they're digging out in the desert or whatever for gold or

1 something, there's a lot of holes there, there's a reason. Do we
2 think there's a leak? That I would have either pushed -- if I was
3 in the field I'd have pushed to my command or I would have made
4 calls myself just to try to find out. But, no, I wouldn't have,
5 based on the first one.

6 The second one was just two houses down. Now my ears have
7 perked up. Even after the fact with a fire, and I look and two
8 houses down I see, oh, B shift was there. Even if I'm on another
9 shift, that doesn't happen unless we have an arsonist around, and
10 that has happened. You have things, those Molotov cocktails,
11 whatever, they set things, and it goes up. But typically it's in
12 -- it's a reason. You see it during tax time. Okay. We're not
13 quite there. End of the year, holidays. You see vengeful,
14 spiteful fire. There's all kind of reasons, but there's got to be
15 something there that precipitates that.

16 And in this case I'm here in this house, and I look just two
17 houses down we got a problem. Then I see in the alley there's
18 some digging going on. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to go
19 something's up. So it's a lot different from having an electrical
20 range than it is to have a gas stove. That's the best to cook on,
21 by the way. So --

22 Q. Okay. So let's say, again, if things went perfectly the way
23 you would have liked them, after the second incident, you --

24 A. The second incident.

25 Q. Yes. And so now you have the second and the first.

1 A. Okay.

2 Q. What actions would you have taken from that point on?

3 A. Personally, if things went well, the second one, like I
4 stated just a minute ago, having seen a house two doors down,
5 literally two doors down, that had a fire that had an injury that
6 was transported, and then having an explosion, injury at this
7 house, and then hearing the statements from what the arson
8 investigators got or even the guys that were putting him in the
9 ambulance, you know, this thing rolled over, flashed over, this
10 one blew up, whatever, yeah, your head should have been on swivel.
11 And that should have then caused somebody to reach out, whether it
12 was up the chain, even to my level or at least to the deputy's
13 level or at least to the battalion chief's level to say chase down
14 what's going on.

15 And so, yeah, if all things worked perfectly, I would have
16 had arson investigators that would have done a ringdown. I would
17 have had a redundancy where the troops in the field had
18 communicated, and then put that together to realize there's
19 something a little bit different here. And since that was 2 days
20 before the fatality, who knows. But in my mind, you put those two
21 pieces together, maybe we can -- just like we've done now, shut
22 the gas off, make an evacuation, figure out what's quite there,
23 get some readings, what's going on. It's not a normal -- that is
24 not normal.

25 Q. Right.

1 A. In a city this large to have fires that are similar in what
2 caused them, and, again, cause and origin, had that been
3 communicated, bam bam. So --

4 Q. Right. Because we have incidents 21st, 22nd --

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. -- 23rd.

7 A. Third, all --

8 Q. So this was the day before the big one. So --

9 A. Actually it was --

10 Q. All that --

11 A. Actually it was -- yes. Yes, sir. You're right.

12 Q. Could all of that what you've just described been done on the
13 22nd and elevated up the chain? I'm just trying to get a reading
14 what's your perspective.

15 A. Yes, sir. I think that could have -- it would have caused
16 some, I want to say at least some exploratory discussions on
17 what's going on. And I think it would have been pertinent, not
18 only for the neighborhood, but even for the fire crews to know
19 this is an anomaly.

20 Now is that on any one individual? No. It's a totality of
21 things that were just -- it's kind of like I hate to use that
22 adage the old Swiss cheese, when you got all the holes, until
23 everything lines up and somebody gets bit, it's not a problem.
24 But in this case, weather, issues, it just all lined up, and none
25 of that was seen until after the fact.

1 Now we're on top of it. And, unfortunately, that's life. I
2 wish it would have been caught sooner though at least in
3 communications, some talks.

4 And really, again, another bad thing is this is a weekend.
5 Most people, City Hall, 4:00, they're gone. I was down there late
6 because things were still going on. It's hard. And, I mean, in
7 this case Atmos that's a business. They probably already got
8 their marching orders, here's what we're doing. It's hard to get
9 people that can pull strings, because what we have seen on scenes
10 you'll get people, and they're not the supervisor that can
11 authorize whatever it is. We're talking about money. That's what
12 -- that's why people are in business. I get that. I'm not saying
13 that was the driving factor, but weekends it's hard to get things
14 done on a weekend.

15 Q. Going to change directions just a bit, and we heard three
16 unusual observations. And if I can get your comment on or your
17 expertise. One was the red flame where there should have been a
18 blue. One was this flash fire when the person was cooking that
19 was unexpected. And the third was sort of a fire under the
20 floorboard. And could you just talk about those?

21 A. Yeah. Okay. So red flame. Anybody that's had fire school
22 or even hazmat you know the different color flames, which what are
23 the heats, what's caused it. But in this case when you're dealing
24 with something, especially all of them the common denominator
25 dealing with a stove and burning or a space heater, when you have

1 a red flame or a orange flame even, that's incomplete combustion.
2 It tells you you've got an issue there either with gas flow or
3 you've got some type of oxygenation that's been, I guess, put in
4 there in pressure, and you're not getting a true flow of gas,
5 natural gas. When the gas is pure, you'll have a nice pretty blue
6 flame with a nice white tip and kind of a black circle, if you
7 will, at the top of the flame. That's a good hot flame. That's
8 the way gas should burn.

9 The individual said he saw a red flame, and then it just
10 flashed over him. That tells me that he had probably a high level
11 of gas per volume in his house or area, confined space, and that
12 it was too rich at one time to flash. I think he had actually, as
13 we would say in the industry, finally sucked air and got what it
14 needed to do the fa-voomp, and then all the fuel is gone. So now
15 it's just building up again waiting to get another breath of
16 whatever is out there. So you go from that flammable range down
17 to where it's too lean, too rich. I think it was too rich. It
18 got back in that flammable range, and it lit off.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. On the fire underneath the pier and beam, I think that should
21 have been, and I think that was alluded to, that's a very --
22 that's different. You don't see that unless you've got some type
23 of hydrocarbon or flammable liquid. Typically hydrocarbons that
24 you have poured -- because the specific gravity of hydrocarbon is
25 obviously when the water and all that's going to float on the

1 liquid. So here in Texas it's dirt. You're going to have mud and
2 water under there. It's going to typically pool to the top. It
3 could have been that burning off. Could have been a hydrocarbon.

4 But in this particular case, one thing I heard on that house
5 was they saw the gas feeder line to the residence that had been
6 displaced. And I think the flame that they may have been seeing
7 once that initial kaboom went, it disjointed that, and I think
8 they had that void that had filled up maybe with gas again because
9 it was free flowing, I'm assuming. And the fact that the officer
10 said they got a call for a fire, and they saw a little smoke, and
11 then nothing. All of a sudden they had 40-foot flames or 20-foot
12 flames, whatever he said. That's unusual to go from zero to 100.
13 And then to see fire under the floorboard, that tells me something
14 is feeding it there. Is either -- because then he said it went
15 right out. They put water on it, boom. And as we know, if it's
16 free flowing that's why it was important to get the gas cut off.
17 It's probably just building up in that void, and it's just looking
18 for an ignition source.

19 So could that have happened before? Sure. I don't know.
20 Maybe they had -- maybe something had gotten disjointed before for
21 whatever reason. Especially in those areas, older homes, that's
22 just a void waiting to be filled with gas. It's trying to get up.
23 It's lighter than air. It's trying to get up and get out of
24 there, but it's confined by whatever box it's in.

25 DR. JENNER: Okay. Appreciate that, and I'm going to pass it

1 around.

2 MR. PADGETT: I went more than 20 minutes.

3 MS. GUNARATNAM: This is Rachael. I did have a question. I
4 got sidetracked.

5 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

6 Q. Oh. In many of the interviews that we heard, we heard people
7 did not smell gas. Do you think that was influenced by the
8 weather?

9 A. I think it was, but that's also -- that's puzzling to me. I
10 mean, there's a couple of things out of this that are puzzling to
11 me. One, where's the heater? Two -- it was kind of like Wendy's.
12 Where's the beef? Two, why was there no mercaptan smell? And I
13 know there's a small percentage of the public that cannot smell
14 that. That's why you do the banana oil test and different things.
15 But that's a classic. I mean, the whole reason that we have those
16 odors put in there is because of the fire that occurred at the
17 elementary school here in Texas. And back then they didn't put
18 odor in it, and nobody knew it was in the void. So we -- a
19 history lesson just here in Texas.

20 But that should have -- I think that should have been
21 something. And only thing I can put that to is (a) when it rains
22 here not only could that knock down the vapors, but it also
23 compacts the sand that gas lines are typically running in, which
24 is kind of like that's the whole reason we have all these oil
25 companies coming back and fracking those old oil holes because

1 they're busting up that sandstone and all to get the gas out. So
2 the fact that it's capped at one time, that doesn't mean it's not
3 there. You can pop it up again, it comes out.

4 So we start having -- it's wet again today. We get a heavy
5 rain tonight or maybe tomorrow, and then we have 80 degrees come
6 Sunday, we may have a lot smelling. So I truly think because of
7 the rain we had, and the fact that it was either suppressing those
8 fumes or knocking them down. Because there is no way under God's
9 green earth that transmission lines from any company, in this case
10 Atmos, would be flowing through there without the odor in it. I
11 mean, I can see that on the front end before it gets to the
12 distribution hubs, but once that's added, that's not normal. So
13 that's the only thing I can equate that to is the weather.

14 Q. Right.

15 A. And the rainy time frame.

16 Q. Okay. And you said you gathered odor calls since February
17 16th. What was the area?

18 A. I had them -- I pushed it out. It was to the original -- I
19 don't know why I don't have my map here. I guess I left it in the
20 car. Oh, actually, you know what, I can pull it up on this.
21 Stand by here. Give me a second. I had our computer group pull
22 the runs that were from -- let me get it, let me get it, let me
23 get it. I apologize. I got --

24 Q. It's okay. You pulled it from February 16th to the 23rd?

25 A. Yes, ma'am. Let's see -- yesterday. Was yesterday Monday?

1 I've lost track of days.

2 Q. Yesterday was Monday.

3 A. Okay. Thank you. That's bad. Where am I? Did I wake up?
4 What's your name? I know that like the back of my hand. Whose
5 hand is that? Got all those one-liners, right.

6 Well, I didn't realize how many emails I had coming in. I
7 think it's interesting that Paradigm liaison is offering their dig
8 test class now. Just sent it out this week. Let's see here.

9 Q. You can get it to me afterwards. That's okay.

10 A. Okay.

11 Q. Yeah. Yeah.

12 A. Anyway, it was the 8-block area that I initially had asked it
13 to expand outside of what Atmos was saying.

14 Q. Right.

15 A. And it went up to -- basically went up to Foster Middle
16 School or Elementary School all the way down to Webb Chapel to
17 Larga over to Marsh.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. And so I told them if there's anything that's closer than
20 that because when they put a GIS circle they can kind of pull it
21 out if anything popped up kind of relative. Because at that time
22 we hadn't expanded it to Chapel Creek and across Marsh. So I just
23 told them in that area.

24 Now they're flagging everything that comes in. They're
25 notifying us, and saying, hey, we're making a run over here. Like

1 this morning, they had a car fire down there on Northwest Highway,
2 and they're just alerting Webb Chapel Command, they're calling it,
3 we got a car fire in case, you know, it's not related to what you
4 all are doing. So --

5 Q. Okay. And you said it was 12?

6 A. I'm sorry?

7 Q. You said it was 12 that --

8 A. I think, I think.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. I got the PDFs actually, and I'm going to have all that for
11 you all.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. It was either 11 or 12, and I've got numbers in my head that
14 are going everywhere. So don't quite me on that, but yes, ma'am.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. It was more than a handful.

17 Q. All right.

18 A. That's just for a week.

19 Q. Yeah. So if your staff had maybe seen that number, and then
20 February 21st happened, do you think maybe they would've had
21 communication --

22 A. Yeah. But, you know, and I don't --

23 Q. -- of a gas issue?

24 A. -- know if that's out there, but I don't know if there's a
25 program that can behind the scenes -- you know, like I told you

1 how many calls we make. I don't know if there's a program in our
2 computer assisted dispatch or out in the dispatch world of other
3 cities that can look at quantitative information, and then go
4 oops, we got an anomaly here. Kind of like Watson or whatever.
5 And go, hey, you've got a cluster here of something. This needs
6 -- danger, Will Robinson, need to look at that. I don't know if
7 that's there.

8 That would be nice for you or I to invent and sell it to
9 somebody. I think that would just help anybody. I mean, heck,
10 anybody would want that, but I don't think we have that
11 capability. It's only until I would say draw a box around this,
12 and give me --

13 Q. Right. Okay. Just last question. Do you have any
14 experience with methane or natural gas alarms?

15 A. Alarms?

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. Yes, ma'am. Fixed or handheld?

18 Q. Fixed.

19 A. Fixed sites. We have places, Praxair, we have
20 (indiscernible), places like that that have fixed sites that have
21 monitoring equipment that's rolling 24/7. Worker safety and/or
22 the public, but yes, ma'am.

23 Q. And do you -- have you ever seen them used in residential --

24 A. As far as methane, I know there's some on the market by Kidde
25 and some of the others. I don't know if I hold a lot of stock in

1 that.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Simply because of, I won't say user error, but same thing on
4 the carbon monoxide side when they first came out, said we're
5 going to have a dual carbon monoxide and ionization detector for
6 smoke or whatever. Those didn't seem to work. They're better
7 standalone. But I have not seen any in residential areas that
8 were a fixed methane detector. I know they're out there. I don't
9 even have them in my house but --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. So --

12 Q. Thank you.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No questions.

14 MR. MURDOCK: I have one.

15 MR. PADGETT: Okay. Yes, sir.

16 MR. MURDOCK: Phillip Murdock, Atmos Energy.

17 BY MR. MURDOCK:

18 Q. You mentioned communications, communications, communications.
19 And we heard Captain Baker talk about he wished that hazmat would
20 be called on more gas calls. And he went so far as to say that he
21 would like to see Atmos either text or email hazmat when they were
22 rolling on a gas call. And you mentioned that as well, you wished
23 hazmat rolled on more gas calls. What's your opinion around at
24 what point does communication become so burdensome that it becomes
25 noise?

1 A. Yeah, I think that's a very, very good point. Because as I
2 can imagine how many lines that you all go on because I know how
3 many we go on. There's many that we probably do not know about.
4 I think that's the problem is it's noise. And I can use an
5 example to kind of answer your question.

6 Storm water management herein in Dallas, we have a zero
7 hydrocarbon tolerance. So we have car wrecks, whatever, if we
8 have over 2 gallons that hits the ground, we make notification
9 stormwater, wherever it is, where they can make the proper
10 switches, if you will, to cut off inflows and things.

11 And then we had fires. We use a product -- used to use a
12 product AFFF, which is found to have carcinogens in it. But the
13 storm water management wanted to be notified on every time we had
14 a fire where we utilized foam. We said, okay. I told the lady,
15 you're just going to want our two alarm fires. You're not going
16 to want all of them. Well, after a week and she had a little over
17 12,000 calls she -- it's like you said noise. I don't want those.
18 So, yes, sir, I think it's noise.

19 I think the key of communication here, maybe not so much
20 Atmos notifying us, hey, we're going on here and here and here,
21 because it will become noise, but it's the fire crews, which are
22 responsible for that, giving a heads up when it's something more
23 than just I backed over a gas line, and we're here to stand by a
24 meter. So there's got to be a sweet spot there where we don't
25 wait until the world is coming to an end, and we don't go out on

1 every time somebody smells -- somebody pass gas from a cow or
2 whatever it is. So I agree with that 100 percent. You can be
3 overwhelmed with anything. And in this case, yes, the fatigue and
4 the noise would end up creating, I think, more problems than the
5 information that potentially could be gleaned from that.

6 MR. MURDOCK: Thank you.

7 MR. PADGETT: That's it?

8 DR. JENNER: Just about. You -- we're very close. I just
9 want to make the observation about 5 minutes ago you said danger
10 Will Robinson. And I just want to make the observation there are
11 only three people in this room old enough to get that reference.

12 MR. PADGETT: Oh, yeah. Lost in Space.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Lost in Space.

14 DR. JENNER: The original Lost in Space. Okay. The
15 original.

16 MR. PADGETT: I'm sorry. I should have clarified.

17 DR. JENNER: No, that's fine. We can clear that --

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You want that on the transcript?

19 DR. JENNER: Yes, I do. Because we may be looking, who is
20 this Will Robinson guy?

21 MR. PADGETT: That's true. That would be hard to explain.

22 BY DR. JENNER:

23 Q. Next to that, my last question though I'm going to ask --

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. -- if there's any thoughts you have that can help us with the

1 investigation that we haven't already discussed either between you
2 or anyone else we talked to the last couple of days?

3 A. Off the top of my head, again, I'm not privy to that. I know
4 we'll see things after it, but I'm curious to hear kind of from
5 the Atmos side operational folks, kind of if there's this -- we
6 have blinders on because of our jobs. We're doing our job.
7 They're doing their job. And apparently we weren't looking at
8 this, that and the other. Be interesting to see where those two
9 pieces tie up.

10 In your investigation, I think, we've heard common
11 denominators and things that, as I alluded to earlier, the Swiss
12 cheese where it's finally just lined up where all the holes came
13 out with a bad outcome. I heard one of our investigators say this
14 is not a common type of call. I would disagree with that, as we
15 have especially in an aging infrastructure anywhere, but here in
16 Dallas with the movement, as I alluded to, I think that is
17 something that needs to be focused on by you all.

18 So you're kind of asking me the weather dynamics, the fact of
19 the hot, cold, lots of rain. Just, I mean, as I call it in
20 Tennessee a septic tank overflow rain. Literally we've had the
21 fire station closed because of some of the other collapses of
22 sewer lines and all here in Dallas. So this area is not immune to
23 having movement. We're right on the edge of the Barnett Shale
24 right here at the Dallas County Line to Tarrant County. There's a
25 lot of movement. And I'm not an engineer on that aspect, but

1 we've had, ever since the fracking and stuff started we've had
2 earthquakes, all kind of things. So there is movement. We talked
3 about the clay soils. I think that has a bearing on everything
4 involved.

5 So that's the only kind of bit I can throw out there that
6 maybe we haven't chased down. I don't know if that's a factor,
7 but it's just something that's kind of in the back of my head.

8 DR. JENNER: Terrific. Okay. Looking around the room there
9 are no additional questions. So I want to thank you very much for
10 your --

11 MR. PADGETT: You're very welcome. Entertainment --

12 DR. JENNER: -- all your --

13 MR. PADGETT: -- for the last --

14 DR. JENNER: Terrific. It is 3:35, and we're done with this.

15 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

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 Ted Padgett

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.



Katherine Motley
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of: *

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

* Accident No.: PLD18FR002

* * * * *

Interview of: TED PADGETT, Chief of Staff
Dallas Fire-Rescue

Walnut Hill Recreation Center
Dallas, Texas

Tuesday,
February 27, 2018

APPEARANCES:

STEPHEN JENNER, Human Performance Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

RACHAEL GUNARATNAM, hazmat Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

JIM COLLINS, Regional Manager
Railroad Commission of Texas

JOSE CHEVEREZ, Pipeline Inspector
Railroad Commission of Texas

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

PHILLIP MURDOCK, Director of Engineering and Compliance
Atmos Energy

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>I N D E X</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Ted Padgett:		
By Dr. Jenner		5
By Ms. Gunaratnam		33
By Dr. Jenner		47
By Mr. Gunaratnam		79
By Mr. Murdock		84
Dr. Jenner		86

I N T E R V I E W

(1:05 p.m.)

1
2
3 DR. JENNER: Good afternoon. My name is Stephen Jenner. I'm
4 an investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board out
5 of Washington, DC. Today is Tuesday, February 27, 2018, and the
6 time is 1:05 p.m., Central Daylight Time. We are currently at the
7 Walnut Hill Recreation Center in Dallas. We are here in response
8 to the house explosion on Espanola Drive in Dallas that occurred
9 on February 23, 2018. We will be talking to Mr. Padgett, Padgett.

10 MR. PADGETT: Padgett.

11 DR. JENNER: I made you French for a second.

12 But before we do that, we'll have each of us introduce
13 ourselves with our spelling and who we're with.

14 I'm Stephen Jenner, S-t-e-p-h-e-n, J-e-n-n-e-r, a human
15 performance investigator with the NTSB.

16 MS. GUNARATNAM: Rachael Gunaratnam, R-a-c-h-a-e-l,
17 G-u-n-a-r-a-t-n-a-m, a hazmat investigator with NTSB.

18 MR. COLLINS: Jim Collins, J-i-m, C-o-l-l-i-n-s, regional
19 manager for the Railroad Commission of Texas.

20 MR. CHEVEREZ: Jose Cheverez, J-o-s-e, C-h-e-v-e-r-e-z,
21 pipeline inspector for the Railroad Commission of Texas.

22 MS. COLLETTI: Alex Colletti, PHMSA, Accident Division,
23 A-l-e-x, C-o-l-l-e-t-t-i.

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, Atmos Energy.

1 MR. PADGETT: I'm Ted Padgett, T-e-d P-a-d-g-e-t-t. I'm the
2 Chief of Staff of the Dallas Fire-Rescue Department,
3 P-a-d-g-e-t-t. We have an operator standing by.

4 DR. JENNER: Terrific. Thank you.

5 INTERVIEW OF TED PADGETT

6 BY DR. JENNER:

7 Q. Chief, if you would, just let us know about your background.
8 Start from day 1 when you got interested in fire and rescue, and
9 work your way up to your present position.

10 A. Okay. You going to let me say what I want to say? I grew up
11 in the booming metropolis of Strawberry Plains, Tennessee, which
12 the big industry was taking bottles back to the store. And since
13 we came up with plastic, ruined my career choice.

14 So after college, I went to the Air Force. I was in the Air
15 Force. Go out of the Air Force January 17, 1985. I was a pilot.
16 I was headed home to Tennessee, and stopped with a friend that my
17 dad had flown with when he was in the service, and their son was
18 my age. Didn't really know him that well from when we were
19 younger, but had said he went to work for the fire department. I
20 said tell me about this. He said they work 1 day, and they're off
21 2 days. So that was the hook that got me in.

22 I don't have family in Texas other than my wife. And I
23 joined. I had security clearance from the Air Force. So I was
24 sitting in rookie school on February 6, 1985; so 2 weeks after
25 getting out of active duty.

1 As I stated, I have -- I went to college, played football.
2 The school called Carson Newman University. It's in east
3 Tennessee. I got my master's from the University of Tennessee. I
4 got another master's from Columbia, and I got a doctorate from the
5 University of Texas at Arlington.

6 I have been with the fire department now -- I've started my
7 34th year February 6th, as I stated earlier. I have done
8 everything there is in this department. I have been a paramedic.
9 As everyone here, you have to hire on to be a paramedic. I rode
10 the box for the first 13 years, I guess. I was assigned to
11 special ops stations, hazmat, search and rescue, swift water.
12 Came up through the ranks. We used to have a rank back in the day
13 it was called a second driver. And you had a driver engineer
14 operator, a lieutenant, captain, battalion chief, deputy chief,
15 assistant chief. My position now is that I'm 801, which is the
16 number 2 to the chief of the department. So I'm the, I guess,
17 power behind the throne. I have four assistants that report to
18 me. So even though I'm an assistant chief rank, I don't know what
19 the -- I guess, I'm 800.5 because 800 is the chief of the
20 department.

21 Our Chief, Chief Coatney, just took the job here 18 months
22 ago. So he came here, and I've been, I won't say his confidant,
23 but I've been kind of the keeper of all things of record, and how
24 things are done or were done. And I'd like to go on the record to
25 say that I've worked for a lot of chiefs over the years. This is

1 the first leader I've actually worked for. So I'm excited to say
2 that, and that wasn't paid for, obviously.

3 I was the -- I guess, pertinent to this, I've had all kind of
4 training, and -- a Harvard fellowship. I've had IFSAC fire
5 officer certs all the way up. I've been at Texas A&M Mays Center.
6 Gotten degrees and certificates all over the place: Master
7 Firefighter, Master Inspector, Master Instructor, Master
8 Investigator. I'm hazmat technician, special skills, subject
9 matter expert on WMD. And do a lot of things for some of the
10 governmental contracts -- SAIC, EAI -- contracting here and there
11 for whatever it may be Task Force One, so I've worked at big
12 events, from the Winter Olympics all the way to Republican,
13 Democratic conventions, all kind of -- more hurricanes and things
14 than I can mention -- Katrina, Rita, 9/11. Been there, done that.
15 Right place, wrong time, I guess.

16 And I ran the hazmat program here. Actually got it off its
17 feet, started it. I left that in '05, I want to say, and we've
18 had others that have kind of taken the ball and run with it. But
19 I stayed with hazmat until really 2010 on the fringes, and then I
20 was -- our chief at the time -- I was considered, I'll say this
21 myself, I was considered Mr. Fix It. So I was sent from the fire
22 operations side to the arson investigations side. I was over
23 there as a deputy, and then promoted to assistant chief January of
24 2017. So I've been the assistant chief for 5 years and some
25 change.

1 And I enjoy movies. I'm a scratch golfer. I used to be an
2 athlete. Now I'm just athlete -- athletic supporter, I guess.
3 That's pretty much. My wife, I've been married 30 years. My wife
4 is a nurse at the ER Baylor here, which is a major trauma center.
5 I have one daughter. She's got a job in Columbus. Works for the
6 -- Amazon has taken over the world. So she's a TCU person, so go
7 Frogs. That's all. All right.

8 Q. All right.

9 A. More than you needed there.

10 Q. Terrific. I appreciate that. Okay. You know why we're
11 here.

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. And I understand that you had some level of involvement in
14 the most significant of these incidents. And if you would, just
15 walk us through your level of involvement from the moment you were
16 notified.

17 A. Okay. As I think you heard earlier, we have rotating on-call
18 just so one of the individual assistants or the deputies don't get
19 their teeth kicked in, quite frankly, for the number of calls that
20 come in. So in this particular case, I was not on call, but I was
21 because the chief of the department had a death in the family and
22 had flown out of state. Was gone since Thursday morning --
23 actually, Wednesday night, Thursday morning. So as we say, I had
24 the con.

25 I knew that the deputy on call -- actually it was to be

1 Assistant Chief Bret Stidham, who is over our emergency operations
2 & EMS. He was out of town for his daughter's something down in
3 San Antonio. And so Deputy Chief Lauren Johnson, who is very
4 capable, assumed his, what we call the 101, the on-call.

5 So where I came into this, long story short, when the chief
6 is gone -- let me kind of back up. My job as chief of staff is
7 primarily twofold. One, it allows the chief of the department to
8 be a figurehead that deals with city council, mayors, government
9 entities, you name it. And then that allows me to operate, in a
10 roundabout way, the department through the other assistant
11 chiefs. I handle the day-to-day stuff and/or anything that's too
12 weird, wet and sticky, it kind of drops on my desk. Not that we
13 don't have a capable chief, but that seems to work really well,
14 and I've never had aspirations to be the guy. I'm kind of just
15 falling into this, and it shows you that any nut can become an oak
16 if you just hold your roots long enough. Side commentary. Sorry.
17 The fact is, through that, that allows him to stay free and clear,
18 and have an objective view. And I'm a sounding board, as I
19 stated, confidant.

20 So once he was out of town, obviously, all that came to me.
21 So I started getting inundated with just things here and there,
22 typical routine things for a city manager, mayor. Friday morning,
23 however, at about, I want to say it was around 7:00, 10 minutes to
24 7, maybe, I got bumped by the -- or paged by the dispatch, our
25 communications, that said that they had a fire. Well, the way

1 they put out what's called a 2-11 page, not meaning that we had a
2 two alarm fire, but it's a significant event. And so I got bumped
3 on that, and from that I'll get information that I can pass to
4 city council members, mayor, press, whatever it may be. And it
5 said that we had a fire, and then it said -- came back, and said,
6 correction, explosion or believed explosion on Espanola.

7 So at that particular time, this is about 7:25. I was
8 leaving the house at 6:45, so I was en route to Dallas just as I
9 do every morning. And I live approximately 20 miles outside the
10 city limits of Dallas, off Interstate 20, which is the town of
11 Talty. So it's a straight shot for me to hit 20 to 175, and I'm
12 downtown. You all may not be familiar with that, but it's easy
13 driving except for dead man's curve down there.

14 So I've got my Bluetooth on the phone, and I'm listening to
15 the radio dispatches, and hearing what's going on. So I hear 806,
16 which is our deputy chief that controls the north half of the city
17 on any day, and it's Ray O'Dell. He's a friend of mine. He's
18 been on about 30-something years. And I called Ray, and I said,
19 Ray, what do we have? He said, well, it looks like we had a
20 explosion, but we've got the people en route to the hospital. He
21 gave me an update on how many we had, and I'll give you those
22 specifics in a minute.

23 But I said, Ray, I've heard on the dispatch reports they're
24 thinking explosion. He said, yeah, you know, he said, Atmos is
25 all out here, he said, but I think we've got **it** handled. I
said,

1 here's what I want you to do. I said, did hazmat roll on this?
2 And he said they did, but I turned them back around. And I said,
3 all right, Ray, I just want to tell you, I'm not going to make it
4 look like I've overrun you, but I'm calling dispatch and having
5 them kick out hazmat back there just for several reasons. One, I
6 want to get some readings that our techs understand. I know Atmos
7 does a percent per volume of air on their readings. And I said
8 our guys are used to doing parts per million. Now we can convert
9 that, but -- we have some people working today that are very good
10 at that. I want to get our field diagnostics out there just to
11 see what we have.

12 Okay. So I called dispatch. Hazmat rolled. Obviously, I
13 called Captain Baker by phone and said, hey, I need you to head
14 out to the scene and head up the hazmat part. I said, let me know
15 when you get there what Atmos **has to** say, and then fill me in. I
16 headed to the office.

17 So I got to City Hall. I had three assistants that were off
18 that day. So I had a deputy chief, Chris Williford, who is kind
19 of my -- was my go-to guy that day. Because I'm getting
20 everything in the world from the city managers, and now hearing it
21 in the press, and the news they're wanting information. So I'm
22 typing up some situation reports at the same time thinking about
23 all the things I need to do. So we had a bad weather situation
24 that day. I had Greg, who -- not Greg, Chris Williford. Chris
25 Williford, Deputy Chief Williford, go down a list that I was

1 spouting things off, and I had him and another gentleman Thornton,
2 Chief Thornton, Ben Thornton, that were in the office that were
3 kind of my runners and making calls and doing things while I was
4 trying to get operations.

5 I called our GIS and told him make me some maps, poster-size,
6 where I could put them in my office, and see what we have where I
7 can start plotting things. I called for DART to send a bus
8 because I was already thinking evacuation. Police also. Police
9 had responded, but I asked for them to send several more elements.

10 I got -- somewhere in there, probably around, I don't know,
11 8:15, 30, maybe, I got a phone call from Captain Baker. Told me
12 what he had as far as some readings, and I said, okay, here's what
13 I want to do. He -- well, he said Atmos is talking about a
14 potential 2, maybe 3-block evacuation. And I said, okay, I'm
15 looking at this. In the meantime, I had asked dispatch to run me
16 any reports of gas leaks, calls, anything that had been in that
17 area over the past couple of days. And in this particular case,
18 they just went back to Wednesday, I believe, the 21st. I think
19 Friday was the 23rd. Yeah. And two particular incidents popped
20 up on Durango, which is -- actually shares an alley.

21 As firefighters, you know, we have a little saying, when
22 you're looking at street addresses especially if you don't know,
23 you know, it's always east is even, south's the same, north and
24 west are odd. So when you're looking at -- when I saw all the odd
25 numbers for the alleyway I knew that we were talking about the

1 side of the street there for Durango, and the even numbers on
2 Espanola, et cetera.

3 So we -- I said, that's interesting because they're a street
4 apart; then I saw the alleyway. So all this is going on while
5 I've got other people on the line. I'm typing. And so he says 2
6 to 3 blocks, and I said, okay, here's my thing: I've dealt with
7 Atmos many times before over the years, and before that it was
8 Lone Star Gas. And I said, whatever they're saying, I want you to
9 double it, possibly triple it. So I made the decision to go with
10 what Atmos had on readings, but I expanded it in the auspice of
11 public safety just until I knew what we had. I didn't have eyes.
12 I'm listening through my command, and kind of doing an incident
13 command off-site, obviously. I can't see it from my house kind of
14 thing.

15 So then it came to me that, okay, we've got a grid. Atmos is
16 telling us there's a grid that has this many streets. Okay. That
17 was, as you all have seen, kind of one of the maps that was a
18 grayed-out area. And I saw the elementary school, and I asked --
19 I know Captain Baker was saying he didn't know who told him to go
20 up to the school or whatever. But at that particular time, I was
21 talking to -- just spaced out. Rutledge.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Benning.

23 MR. PADGETT: Not Rosenberg.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Kyle.

25 MR. PADGETT: Tyler.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Slaughter.

2 MR. PADGETT: Slaughter, yeah. I don't know what -- what did
3 I say. Anyway, I had gotten on the -- let me back up on that.
4 Hold that point.

5 Probably 7, 8 months ago, I went down to the Atmos office on
6 Oak, and -- I believe it's Oak, right there in southeast Dallas,
7 and went in and met Mr. Slaughter, Mr. Rosenberg, Ms. Harris,
8 several of the higher-ups, I guess, that do the operations stuff.
9 Just as I do typically -- I used to do that in hazmat, get to know
10 who is around what, special utilities, and just had a time just to
11 sit and talk, kind of see what they were doing. They were -- at
12 that time Mr. Slaughter was the head guy. Mr. Rosenberg was in
13 there, and I think Mr. Rosenberg is this -- the area operations
14 manager or something. You know, they were asking me anything we
15 need, whatever.

16 We have, in the past, Atmos has -- as Captain Baker talked,
17 we knew -- when I was running hazmat, we knew that there was an
18 issue with the Atmos repair techs and our hazmat techs talking on
19 the same page. As I alluded to earlier, parts per million versus
20 percent per volume of air. So Atmos was actually the one that
21 suggested -- they used at that time those SENSITs. And so they
22 were the ones that suggested, hey, we'll get you -- they actually
23 got us some monitors that would communicate same stuff as theirs,
24 and we would use those as backups. And I've heard we're still
25 using those, which is good. We also use the SENSITs now for Freon

1 detection, any of the other whacko aerosols.

2 So we had a relationship, we, the special operations side of
3 the fire department had a pretty -- and I hate using that word
4 robust -- a good relationship with Atmos as far as training and
5 response to questions we've had. We've taught a number of hazmat
6 schools around this north Texas area, and have had utilized Atmos
7 and other department utilities, Oncor, to name some others, that
8 have brought out props, valving, things of that nature that people
9 can actually play with without having actual hazardous
10 environments -- at the suggestion of Atmos years ago, probably 10,
11 12, we started carrying Mustang tools on the hazmat rig so we
12 could crimp polyethylene line. Not black pipe. We have plugs and
13 things for that, but that pipe is so brittle now we just -- but
14 anything that was basically a 2-inch down we could get there and
15 dig and have the thing grounded, bonded, and crimp it off to save.
16 Because Atmos, that's one thing, they don't -- they can't run Code
17 3. So sometimes it's a long wait when calling them. And so
18 sometimes you feel like a one-legged man in a butt kicking contest
19 when you're out there waiting. So we carry those tools.

20 Typically, most of our techs, we try to not touch anything
21 until we know where the back pressure is going. Especially,
22 unless it's a 1-inch maybe smaller we may do -- or especially a
23 residential or something.

24 Okay. So back to where we were. So out of precaution
25 because they didn't know where the grid exactly went, and this was

1 in conjunction with Mr. Slaughter by proxy, we determined that
2 let's evacuate the school. It was also a good I don't want to say
3 practice, but a training drill for the elementary school. I
4 believe it's Foster Elementary. We had 738 kids, ages pre-K to
5 the fifth grade. So DISD came. That went really smooth. Again,
6 I wasn't on-site, but I'm getting intel updates. They said they
7 had no readings in the school. And so, again, that was a
8 precaution, but I also knew that should something, like it
9 typically does, creep, I didn't want that to be an issue that I
10 had to deal with later. So out of precaution, I went ahead and
11 pulled that trigger. And I've heard a lot of the interviewees say
12 this person or that person, whatever -- it fell in my lap.

13 I communicated that with the city manager and the mayor.
14 Told them what we were doing. At that time, Atmos, for whatever
15 reason, kind of went dark as far as returning calls and things.
16 So the mayor was getting a little frustrated. He, I believe,
17 reached out to the TRCC, and actually may have even gone higher
18 than that. They were trying to get some pressure on some Atmos
19 folks to return calls, PIO and all that stuff. And I know they
20 were overwhelmed. I honestly believe that Atmos was trying to do
21 right. I think they failed in the initial issue on Friday, if not
22 before, but I believe it's because they've never had anything like
23 that here in Dallas, and they didn't **have** the people in place, it
24 took them a while to get their running legs back up under them. I
25 think they're doing a excellent job now, but at the time there

1 were some -- just like everybody, you know, it takes a while to
2 get up to game speed when you're going **all out**.

3 So from that, we rock along with notifications here and
4 there. I'm getting readings. I take Chief Willeford and myself,
5 we came to the actual command scene on Friday at about -- I got
6 there probably 11:30-ish, and took a picture of the house with my
7 personal phone, just a front shot, just to see what it was I was
8 hearing. And based on everything I had heard, and what I saw, and
9 what my knowledge base was, I could tell this was a explosion of
10 some form. No fire damage, walls pushed out, brick veneer off the
11 front, Celotex and Styrofoam everywhere, siding, fences blown.
12 Damage would appear to be the majority on the delta -- alpha delta
13 corner really, maybe more on the delta side, but that's what
14 presented on the front.

15 The chief on-site **at** the command post at this particular
16 **call** was Battalion 7, which was a captain riding up, Combs, Mark
17 Combs. And I was confident with his ability. He's a squared away
18 firefighter. He's a good captain, knows his work. He's been one
19 of our training lieutenants back in the day, and he's real close
20 to making battalion chief permanent. So this is right up his
21 alley. So I was confident what he had done.

22 I came and spoke to him just to get a sit rep. Dallas police
23 had Deputy Chief Watson on location. He came down, and I talked
24 with him. We've known each other over the years. And asked him
25 what he was doing. I told him the evacuation area we had. I

1 wanted him to cordon off the streets, you know, DPD protection,
2 which he had already set up. But I asked him, I said, how many
3 officers do you have? He said I got 14 to 16. I said, how many
4 avenues are in this 4-block area? He said, about 16. I said, are
5 you counting the alleys? He said, no. I said, let's get people
6 on that. We had streets come out and bring barricades. I'll go
7 back. When I pulled up to the scene, I did kind of a 360 of the
8 area. I came up Larga. I went all the way down to, I believe, it
9 was -- let's see -- I need to look at something. Do I even have
10 it? Was it Mixon to the north? Or actually that would be west.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Fontana.

12 MR. PADGETT: Excuse me. East. I'm sorry?

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Fontana.

14 MR. PADGETT: It was just past Fontana. Anyway, I went --
15 did a 360 around that, came in. We came in from the south side or
16 southwest side right there off of Larga and --

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Gaspar?

18 MR. PADGETT: Yes. Thank you. Worked our way up, and then I
19 showed up at command. When I got there hazmat techs were just
20 putting up their monitors. They had been monitoring. And that's
21 when I came down and talked to Mr. Combs. Now back to that.

22 I told him I wanted to make sure he was keeping track of --
23 we call it a 214 on deployments. But Mark understood that a lot
24 of fire service, our incident command, they'll keep boards and
25 things like that, but I told him just keep track. I want you to

1 take pictures of your command board. And the only reason I say
2 all that, this is a significant event when you have a fatality
3 related to something as out of the norm. It's the same as when we
4 have fire fatalities. City of Dallas, you get -- I say you get
5 like there's some magic number, but the average fire fatalities,
6 fire fatalities in a city over a million is 1 per 100,000. So we
7 have, depending on what you read, 1.3, 1.4 million. So 13 or 14
8 fire fatalities a year. I think we had seven last year. But
9 before that we had 16, 14. I can show you the tracking. So those
10 are considered significant events. Anything here in the City of
11 Dallas that's a multiple alarm fire, large property loss,
12 something weird, it's going to hit the press, that's when we get
13 involved. So because of that, I was telling him, especially with
14 line-of-duty death and things I've had, just keep track of what
15 you're doing just for documentation later. Got it.

16 I spoke with -- there was Atmos guy, a contractor actually.
17 I can't -- I can just remember it looked like a drilling rig on
18 the back of his, I guess, safety vest, was kind of dirty. He was
19 talking to Chief Combs. Police, I had Box 4 there, which is our
20 response rig that brings refreshments, and they had just -- I came
21 really at lunchtime, not only to see the scene, but to ask if any
22 of the guys on the scene needed something. I was going to go get
23 them some food, water, whatever. The rehab van was already there,
24 and they had just dropped off McDonald's burgers and some other
25 things. So they were good to go there.

1 So we decided to formulate a plan of here's what I want.
2 Hazmat at that time we thought we had a handle on it. The
3 readings, we weren't getting anything. No one smelled -- I didn't
4 smell anything; no one else smelled anything in that area. There
5 were, I want to say, and I'm just shooting this number out, but I
6 want to say there was about 20 to 30 crews it looked like. When I
7 say crews, two to four people that had punched holes all around
8 this area. There are backhoes, shovels, you name it, in different
9 areas all around there. And I just thought, wow, this is bigger
10 than what we thought when we pulled in. I never smelled anything
11 at all though.

12 So hazmat, as I stated, they were clearing up to go because
13 we were being told, hey, we got a handle on it. It's a leak in
14 this alleyway. Obviously, this was an unfortunate issue, but
15 we're good. So Scott Clumpner, Battalion 9, was at the -- what we
16 set up as the command post at the corner of Larga, Story Lane,
17 Webb Chapel extension, right in that area. And it's a parking lot
18 shopping center thing across from the graveyard. And at that time
19 we didn't have an Atmos van or trailer that they have there **now**.
20 They had been up the street somewhere, I think, and then Chief
21 Clumpner had got with them to bring them **together**. Now they were
22 about 30 feet apart so they could talk.

23 That's when I, like I said, we started -- I got a call, I
24 guess, from NTSB, Mohammed somebody, telling us that you all
25 **were** coming in. They had reported that to Mr. Slaughter. I
told them

1 I had to talk to Mr. Slaughter. He's obviously been busy. And we
2 were told -- actually, let me back up. I'm wrong on that. I
3 didn't talk to Mohammed till Saturday. Friday night -- getting
4 those confused. Friday night, as I told hazmat, we were clearing
5 up, and I said, all right, hang here until the operations are done
6 or finished digging here. We'll shut this down, say 5:00, 1700
7 hours, and we'll go from there.

8 Well, I cleared, went back to the office finishing all the
9 other stuff that we do, and about 6:30 I got a call that they were
10 running again on gas odor or something, and it really wasn't in
11 this grid, but it was close enough kind of perk your ears up. And
12 then I get a call **that** said, hey, they found some more things.
13 We're fixing now to evacuate neighbors and stuff. And we knew we
14 were going to evacuate this little 4-block area that was really
15 expanding. And I remember Atmos, I finally got a hold of, I want
16 to say it was Ms. Harris, and she stated, you know, that they had
17 -- needed a place. We set up the rec center here to kind of have
18 a holding area because -- they hadn't had a lot of people come and
19 ask for things around 3:00, but I told them, this is a blue collar
20 neighborhood and come 5:30 to maybe 7:30, it's going to be quite
21 lengthy. And I remember telling her, do you speak Spanish? And
22 she said, no. I said, you'd better get somebody **that** speaks **or**
23 you're going to have a problem. And I said, I speak enough to get
24 you in trouble so you really want somebody that's going to be on
25 their p's and q's. So we opened up the rec center.

1 That was done through OEM. That's when I contacted them. As
2 I stated, we had a DART bus on-site in case we needed evacs. I
3 cut them loose at probably 3. And all this kind of ramped back up
4 after that. We thought we had it handled. So Friday night, I
5 kept the hazmat -- you know, get your stuff, make sure you're on
6 call, you're at the station.

7 Let's go on to Saturday morning. This is where -- Saturday
8 morning I came back in to Dallas. I got into downtown around
9 9:30, got call from Lauren Johnson, the deputy chief. She was
10 having trouble getting any information back from Atmos. And I
11 told her, okay, let me call some people. I called. I finally
12 called -- I went down the higher-ups order, and I got down to
13 Benny Rosenberg. He picked up immediately, and said, hey, I'm
14 here at their little incident command place, which at that time I
15 was thinking he was over off of Oak. I didn't know that he had
16 actually -- and I believe that's where he told me. I don't
17 remember all the conversation, but he said he was at the command
18 post, which now that I think, it was probably here. I was in east
19 Dallas, and I was going to go by and talk to him if I didn't get
20 any more calls. I was actually going to their office.

21 So he called, and he had Ms. Harris with him. He had a lady
22 named -- yeah, just spaced out. I got the name somewhere but --
23 what's --

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Ocham?

25 MR. PADGETT: I'm sorry.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Ocham from Atmos?

2 MR. PADGETT: Beacham. Is it Beacham?

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It is Beacham.

4 MR. PADGETT: Beacham.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Beacham.

6 MR. PADGETT: Beacham. So I got Ms. Beacham. She came on in
7 the mix, and I asked her what's going on, and she explained to me
8 it wasn't vouchers that they were going to be giving, but they had
9 some, I guess, cards where they could get incidentals or whatever.
10 And so we had decided -- this was Saturday. I got a hold of
11 Captain Baker again. I said, okay, here's what I need you to do.
12 We're going to split your team. I want you to hire back an
13 officer and three technicians to be a scout team so to speak. We
14 maintain the two in and two out. But I want you to set them up
15 with a Suburban and some monitors, and whenever Atmos punches a
16 hole, I want you right there in their hip pocket getting some
17 readings. Or if they have a house that they want to clear, I
18 think he's alluded to that, go in and make sure we have the right
19 diagnostics, so we're talking apples to apples.

20 So that has been going on since Saturday afternoon, I guess.
21 And then it seemed like every time we started to gear it down it
22 would expand. And so really my extent has now been, well, really
23 from the beginning, has been oversight and just kind of juggling
24 the balls to make sure everybody is talking to each other and
25 getting on the same page. In my opinion, as I stated earlier, it

1 was like most things, you have something you have to grab by the
2 tail and reel it in, put it in a little box with a bow on it, and
3 that's kind of what happened in the first few times, days, hours,
4 I guess. I'd says days, hours into Saturday. As I expressed now,
5 I've had a lot of dealings with Atmos and -- both good and bad,
6 but I will say that Mr. Slaughter and Mr. Rosenberg and the people
7 I've talked to, other than that brief period where I'm sure they
8 were overwhelmed, have been pretty responsive.

9 Now I feel like at first they were trying to keep a lid on
10 things because I understood from the business side this thing
11 could get out of whack and it's dollars flying out the door. I
12 get that. I also knew our side it's the public safety. That's
13 what I'm employed to do. And those two have to mirror each other
14 and marry up. But, like I said, since they've gotten their runner
15 legs under them, I think it's been going really well. And as I
16 alluded to earlier, last update is we don't have any citizens with
17 any unmet needs other than a lot of them want to just throw rocks
18 and holler, and so we're going to have a town hall tonight where
19 they can get that off their chest, I guess.

20 That was a long-winded round the world in 365 days. There's
21 a lot of stuff I probably left out. But when the Shiites are
22 hitting the fan -- I'm sorry. I hope nobody is Shiite. If it's
23 hitting the fan it's kind of -- I will offend everybody, and I
24 don't mean it out of prejudice or malfeasance. I grew up in east
25 Tennessee. I still have my own teeth and my shoes, but I do make

1 fun of everybody. That's kind of my way. Firemen, we make fun of
2 things just to keep from crying and stuff. So --

3 BY DR. JENNER:

4 Q. Terrific. Thank you.

5 A. I'm sorry. Around the world in 20 days, right? I told you
6 it would only take 20 minutes.

7 Q. Okay. Terrific. Just a couple questions.

8 A. Okay.

9 Q. You gave us a lot of stuff, but that's good. I made note you
10 had a conversation with Ray about the hazmat decision, and it
11 sounded that they --

12 A. With Bobby Baker you mean? With Ray?

13 Q. With -- I wrote down Ray. You can correct me.

14 A. It was Bobby Baker that I called. That morning?

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. You talking about? Yes, sir.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Ray O'Dell.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No. You spoke to Ray.

19 MR. PADGETT: Oh, Ray O'Dell, yes. I'm sorry. Ray O'Dell.
20 He's the deputy chief. I'm sorry. I was thinking... there's a
21 hazmat tech Ray Thompson that is Bobby Baker's underling, and he
22 may have been on the call. But, no, I was speaking to Ray O'Dell,
23 yes.

24 BY DR. JENNER:

25 Q. Great. So a decision was made to send hazmat and a decision

1 was made to recall, and then you gave your opinion of that. Can
2 you --

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. -- shed a little light on that?

5 A. I talked to Ray, and I said, okay, what happened here? And
6 he said, well, I think they had an explosion, but there's no fire.
7 The patients have been transported. We've got a handle on it.
8 It's good. Atmos is on location. And I said, what readings did
9 hazmat get? And he said, well, hazmat was en route, but I turned
10 them around. And I said, okay. Man, again, this is a teaching
11 thing. I mean, Ray is an experienced battalion chief, but not
12 necessarily experienced on hazmat.

13 And so my first thing is when we have protocols on how
14 natural gas responses, all these different grades are to be
15 responded to and their inner MOPs, but a lot of officers out
16 there, I think the common culture is, you know, we see this enough
17 we have -- well, they're used to possibly a meter in the back
18 alley being backed over and whatever, and they, okay, we can solve
19 this, and we're on the road. They don't usually call us until we
20 see a 2 or 6-inch main with concrete going 50 feet in the air.
21 You know, they go, we need hazmat here now. So I think that was
22 the mentality.

23 And Ray, in his defense as a deputy chief that day, thought
24 the situation is over. Atmos is here. They got it. That's 99
25 percent of the time, Atmos comes in, we stand around. If we need

1 to protect some of their guys to get down in holes or whatever,
2 we'll stand by with a charged hose line or some type of a CO or
3 something that we can protect them in case it goes fa-voomp.
4 Because, you know, gas when it goes fa-voomp, that's a bad day,
5 and we've had that happen a few times.

6 So when he said he turned them around, I said, Ray, just from
7 a PR standpoint, and I mean, that's what I said, I want hazmat out
8 there. If nothing else, because I know there's going to be
9 cameras on this, they can get B roll of the rig there, but I want
10 them out doing monitoring. And I said, I want to verify what
11 Atmos is saying. And I remember saying this, I said, because I've
12 been with Atmos enough times that when their mouth's moving,
13 they're lying, so I want to make sure -- and I didn't mean that
14 ugly. What I'm saying is take what they're telling you as a grain
15 of salt, and I always -- I trust everybody, but I'm going to
16 verify. Does that make sense? So I said, I want someone that
17 understands what we're looking at, and what they're looking at.
18 I'm not here to protect any individual or company, but I want to
19 make sure I'm protecting the people that I'm sworn to serve.

20 So he said, I understand. And I said, plus, I said, Ray,
21 this is something else. We have to make reports to the TCQ and
22 the TRCC. I said, these reports that we send, not only to federal
23 partners and all of this **is** just part of when we have a release, a
24 significant event, a fuel spill, whatever may be, we have
25 thresholds that we have to push out. And he said, I wasn't aware

1 of that, Chief. And I said, again, I'm not chewing on you. I'm
2 just telling you why I'm fixing to call dispatch, and I'm calling
3 Bobby directly on the phone, and I'm rolling them back out there,
4 so when they get there, you're not going, hey, why are they here?
5 And he said, I've just left the scene. Mark Combs is chief on-
6 site. And I said, okay. I said, I need you to go back,
7 coordinate that with Bobby and all because Bobby, as you all have
8 seen, he's probably a lot like me, unfortunately, but he is a ball
9 of energy. And so he loves hazmat as you all can tell, and he's
10 like the little energized bunny. If you give him something, he's
11 all over it. So -- and that's not a bad thing. I mean, he's the
12 guy that sits around, will call me and say, hey, what if? What if
13 we had -- okay. But that's good. Keeps you on your toes.

14 So that's how hazmat got back involved right at about 8:00
15 that morning after they had been brought and sent back. And so
16 even the hazmat guys, when I pulled up on the scene at 11, and
17 they were loading things, some of them that I know, and I won't
18 give their names -- you know, I rolled the window down a little
19 bit as I was pulling in. This was after we had done a 360. And I
20 asked them, I said, can I walk up there without any clothes on?
21 They go, yeah. They go, Chief, we don't have any **readings**. Then
22 they started MF-ing me and all that stuff about why they were out
23 there, which is agitation. I told them, oh -- you know. And then
24 when they realized it was a big deal, they called me later, said
25 Chief, we're sorry. I said, I don't ever take it personal. You

1 know, I pick on myself.

2 But they had come out there, and because they had not gotten
3 anything on the readings, you know, they're, like, why are we back
4 out here? So that's part of the culture too is when you have
5 certain hazmat teams members that are a little more vocal, they
6 get there and they browbeat if they think it's insignificant type
7 event or maybe over, they will browbeat some of the other
8 firefighters into, why are you calling me? We're the hut-hut team
9 that needs to be over here cleaning up a diesel spill right now
10 and whatever. But so that's kind of the thought on why and how
11 they came back.

12 And so that's all I was doing with Ray. Ray O'Dell, Chief
13 O'Dell was -- and I know he had a background. He actually, when
14 he first hired on was a fire inspector, and realized that he
15 wanted to fight fire. He came over after about a year or two to
16 the fire side, and he's loved it. But he couldn't get on the
17 firefighting side because you had to have 20/20 vision, and he had
18 glasses back then or something. So but he is very knowledgeable
19 on fire code things. So he has expertise in a lot of things.
20 Hazmat is not one of his. And so I just explained why. That's
21 all that was, a teaching moment for him in the future, maybe some
22 of his other chiefs. So that's how they got involved.

23 Is that what you asked me?

24 DR. JENNER: Um-hum.

25 MR. PADGETT: Again, engaged just out of precaution.

1 BY DR. JENNER:

2 Q. Right. What I might take away from your reply there was that
3 he thought perhaps the situation was under control because --

4 A. Yes, sir. No, he even told me that. He said, he said, I
5 didn't -- he said, Ted -- of course, we know each other so it's
6 first name, you know, on the phones and all this. And I don't
7 ever go by Chief. I'm Ted. Ted-o. But he said, Ted-o, he said,
8 I didn't see a need for them. He said, I turned them around, to
9 get them back in service.

10 As you all heard earlier, our hazmat team is not a full-time
11 hazmat team. It has 10 personnel assigned to it every day,
12 minimum staffing, but they are assigned to trucks and engines and
13 ambulances. And then when a call comes in, they get off their
14 rigs and go. Captain Baker alluded to when they have an event
15 right downtown Engine 3, Truck 3, Rescue 3, Battalion 1, they all
16 respond. The hazmat rig is sitting back at the station. So it
17 has to be a fill-in or someone to bring those diagnostics and
18 tools and decon, all that stuff to the scene. So that's
19 problematic in our current configuration.

20 I've even through this made a number of notes for Chief
21 Coatney because he's tackling a lot of things. He's kind of like
22 chewing on an elephant, and take a little bit every day. But this
23 is on his radar screen because, again, I like hazmat. I
24 understand hazmat. It was in my blood forever, still is, and
25 that's kind of where the fire service is going now. We don't just

1 fight fire anymore. It's a lot of not only EMS, here in Dallas,
2 like I say, we'll push 300,000 plus runs, and 200,000 of them will
3 be EMS calls. So the rest are fire and weird stuff, you know,
4 hazmat, ARRF, swift water. Today even maybe it will be water
5 rescues, high angle, you name it. So that's kind of what the
6 citizens expect from us now is -- we even get called now because
7 the police officers here in Dallas, people want lights and sirens,
8 and we have under a 4-minute response to pretty much anywhere and
9 so they will call us. And we actually get to scenes before
10 police, which sometimes is not good.

11 But that's what the citizens expect of the fire department.
12 It's not just -- you know, now it's fire prevention and code
13 enforcement and education and EMS and all the specialty things.
14 Firefighting is kind of going away, and that's a good thing. But
15 we have to evolve with it.

16 So really hazmat, especially for this region because they're
17 a regional partner, our hazmat team is engaged in the 16 counties
18 of North Central Texas Council of Governments. A lot of their
19 equipment is -- has been purchased through everything from state
20 homeland security grants, UASI grants, even the Council of
21 Governments. So we have a commitment not only to Dallas but many
22 times we roll outside our city limits, primarily to the east,
23 Kaufman County, southern Dallas County, even to Ellis County,
24 places like that. So -- took you down the road there.

25 Q. Okay. Great. Second question is, you mentioned you had a

1 good relationship with Atmos in terms of training and other
2 things. If -- just get you to expand on that.

3 A. Yes, sir. Atmos, they've built a Disneyland for gas workers
4 and firefighters up in -- it's on the, I guess, Richardson Frisco
5 border. I think it's more in Frisco. But it -- I could probably
6 be wrong on that. I could tell you how to get there. I'd have to
7 shoot you after I got there though.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. No. It's a gas leak training facility. And we've had our --
10 our hazmat team has gone through there a number of times. We've
11 had a couple of engine companies that have gone outside the city
12 limits just to see. But I, myself, have been there. It's
13 something that periodically -- matter of fact, I think they have
14 another awareness, you know, even tying in with Dig Test and some
15 of those other things coming up here probably -- usually it's the
16 end of March, first of April.

17 But no, any time -- and to my knowledge any time we have
18 asked Atmos can we X, Y, Z, they're all over it. Yeah, let's do
19 that, just tell us when. We'll make it available, and we'll have
20 people there. So that has never been a problem to my knowledge
21 with our hazmat team of cooperation and/or -- I mean, I even said
22 earlier that we had monitors there for a number of years that
23 Atmos had purchased and had given to us to utilize in an
24 agreement. And they kept them serviced. Just kind of like we
25 were the users; they were the owners. And then ultimately we got

1 our own stuff and all just because we realized how much -- we
2 didn't first think we were going to use those that much, but it's
3 become beneficial because of being able to talk apples to apples.

4 So, no, we've had -- like I said, we've had training over the
5 years. We've taught hazmat tech classes for the Texas Commission
6 of Fire Protection. We've done a number of classes that have
7 firefighters from the Council of Governments come in, and we've
8 had Atmos representatives come out and speak on gas, you know,
9 what's required on signages, and where -- buried lines, things --
10 all, everything that goes with that, what to look for, bubbles,
11 smells, all the stuff that new operational and even technicians
12 that may not have seen, and they have I won't say war stories, but
13 they have things to show.

14 So we've had the pipeline group come out. There's a group
15 around Dallas called the Danielle Dawn Smalley foundation. We
16 had a -- I want to say it was Explorer pipeline. They had a
17 isobutylene, I think, that blew up in Kaufman County. So they
18 bring out stuff and show all that. So Atmos has been there.

19 DR. JENNER: Okay, great. That's all the questions I have
20 for your involvement in this. So I'll go around the room, and see
21 if anyone has questions, follow-up questions. But I -- after we
22 do that, I'd like to get your impressions about the first two
23 incidents. And so that's part two. But let's address any follow-
24 up questions for this area.

25 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

1 Q. I had a question regarding -- because one thing I'm not clear
2 about is the decision making of the evacuations, and who from the
3 fire department was the one directly involved in that decision
4 making? Because I --

5 A. Directly involved? Because that --

6 Q. Sorry. Authorizing.

7 A. From me.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. I mean, it -- I gave authority to our commanders.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. But ultimately I pulled the trigger. I mean, I -- it's the
12 buck stops with me simply because, again, this was in conjunction
13 with information I received not only from Atmos, but also from my
14 troops. Once I had hazmat there, the more I thought about it, I
15 thought just historically based on experiences I've had over 30
16 some odd years now, I know how these things tend to escalate. And
17 I, as I alluded to earlier, I'd just as soon get a perimeter on
18 it, and then choke it back down than I would to always keep
19 playing catch up. This is kind of knowing what I know today even,
20 this is bugging me that it keeps leapfrogging in places, and I
21 can't really put my thumb on it.

22 Q. Right.

23 A. That's problematic, especially in something of this type.
24 But that's just hazmat training, as you well know. You surround
25 the troops, choke it down, and get it, like I said, put it in a

1 nice little package in a box for somebody to take care of, finish
2 the mitigation, whatever it may be.

3 Q. So --

4 A. So I did not say, you guys, right now I'm at command, you go
5 do this. That was me doing that verbally on the phone saying,
6 here's what I want you to do.

7 Q. Okay. So because Captain Combs -- Captain, right?

8 A. Um-hum.

9 Q. Yeah. He was the first one to make the -- do the 4-block
10 radius?

11 A. Correct.

12 Q. Okay. So he was -- when those evacuation decisions were
13 being discussed, he would then communicate back to you about
14 those?

15 A. He didn't communicate to me directly. These, at this time,
16 were coming from Ray O'Dell --

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. -- and coming from Lauren Johnson. So she's -- the way we do
19 our incident command, there's several little steps. But Lauren
20 was actually my go-to that I was saying here's what I need you to
21 do. Because she was on call. Therefore, I hate to say she had
22 the button, as we call it, and the button was on her. But when
23 she said 4 blocks, I said, I want to double that, and I told her
24 why. And then they're saying, well, this involves a school. And
25 I said, I understand that. Let's get up there, get readings, but

1 let's be proactive just in case.

2 Q. Right. Okay. And then, because from what I understand, on
3 Friday there was four, in total, like, decisions made for -- like
4 to constantly expand, right?

5 A. It kept going. I believe so. Yes, ma'am. And those were
6 dependent on once we had a true incident command set up.

7 Q. Right.

8 A. We start calling it a unified command because we realized
9 this is going to be bigger than what it started off as. Like I
10 said, the deputy chief went home. And so I said, okay, this is
11 going to be something that's going to be drawn out so let's set
12 up a formal command here.

13 Q. Sure.

14 A. I want you all to start -- number one, we had cordoned off
15 the area to where, when people come, we're going to put them in a
16 choke point where they have to come here.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. And if they need pets, tools. I was already getting phone
19 calls, heck, before even 10:00, I got pets there. I got -- heck,
20 I had city attorneys calling me. Hey, I live over there. I have
21 a dog. Can you tell me what's going on? So it's not just them.
22 It's everybody.

23 Q. Yes.

24 A. And I know there's a lot of elderly here. Like I said, it's
25 a working community, so I knew it was really going to expand at

1 night. So that's why I was saying, let's get a handle on this,
2 get a choke point, have them funnel through that. That frustrated
3 a lot of citizens, but I think it was the right thing to do.
4 That's one reason I ordered buses to come out there because of the
5 rain, things got bad, where they could at least just get up on a
6 bus out of the weather. It wasn't to take them anywhere. It was
7 to give shelter.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. We opened up the rec center where they could get some
10 information. You all kind of heard how that worked for a while
11 and then kind of waned in the midnight hours, so to speak. So --

12 Q. So with each decision of those four would you -- they would
13 update you, and say we did this or --

14 A. Yes, ma'am.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Yeah. I'd given them carte blanche.

17 Q. Right.

18 A. I told Lauren, I said, I trust our commanders out there. I
19 knew it was Chief Clumpner. I'm very familiar with his work and I
20 know how diligent he is. Mark Combs, even though he's a captain,
21 I know how diligent he is. Lauren Johnson, outstanding. Even
22 Captain Baker, hazmat, as quirky as he is, he's very good. And
23 his troops are good.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Sometimes you got to light a fire under them, but there's a

1 lot on different shifts that have done really, really well.

2 Q. Okay. So when Atmos wanted to lift that evacuation on
3 Saturday, so Lauren was able to make that decision, say, yeah,
4 okay?

5 A. Correct.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. And, again, based on as she would even say, these are the
8 subject matter experts for this particular product. So I don't
9 want to say that. I gave them free reign to make decisions under
10 my authority on behalf of the fire chief who was gone. Of course,
11 I'm communicating things to him in North Dakota or wherever he
12 was. This whole time, everything I'm doing or they're doing, I'm
13 communicating to the city manager and mayor and our PIO so he can
14 get on it. I also asked our PIO to coordinate with Atmos. He was
15 having a little trouble getting with her. I know her phone was
16 blowing up like everybody's, but making sure they're putting out
17 the same statements.

18 And I was hearing things on the radio that sounded good, but
19 in actuality they weren't occurring. And there was frustration
20 with the citizens about where do we go? Where do we stay?
21 Nobody's -- and a lot of them don't say anything because, quite
22 frankly, a lot of them are -- don't know if you want to say
23 Dreamers or whatever, but they're here and not maybe citizens.
24 And, therefore, I think that's a lot of reason a lot these calls
25 didn't come into 911 potentially. I'm just guessing. Because we

1 have seen even crimes over here they go unreported because of just
2 the fear of authorities and what may happen to me, and that's
3 unfortunate, but that's the reality.

4 Q. So you said you went to Espanola --

5 A. Espanola, yes, ma'am.

6 Q. -- on at around 11:30 a.m. that morning --

7 A. Yes, ma'am.

8 Q. -- to the actual house, and you took photos of the front.

9 A. I took a photo, one photo.

10 Q. One photo, okay. And you observed the damage there. Did you
11 interact with any Atmos people then?

12 A. No, ma'am. Like I said, I saw a, what I believe was a
13 contractor that was on that block that kind of walked up that --
14 and I just remember when he turned around he had on a safety vest.
15 I didn't talk with him, but he had a safety vest that I can still
16 see. It was kind of like a -- looked like a drilling rig. Had a
17 pole. It didn't look like an A-frame drilling platform or
18 something. It just looked like maybe an auger company or
19 something. But I can't even remember the name of it. It didn't
20 say Atmos. I just knew it was like a third-party contractor.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. And I assumed that that was an Atmos contractor, not
23 necessarily Atmos representative. But he was obviously doing
24 something at the end of the street with his crew. Like I said,
25 there were holes being punched.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. At least what I saw all over the place.

3 Q. And how long did you stay?

4 A. I was there probably an hour.

5 Q. Okay. All right. And then you went to the command post
6 after that?

7 A. I drove to the command post. I actually did not go into the
8 command post. I -- because this time we thought we had it done.
9 I was the same way. I told Mark Combs, who was the battalion
10 there, I said, I'm leaving you with this. He said Clumpner is
11 down at the command post. They've moved it together. I said,
12 great. And I said -- he said, it sounds like we're fixing to wrap
13 this up. And I said, okay, just dot your i's and cross your t's.
14 Let me know what you have. Anything changes give me a call. I'm
15 headed back to City Hall.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. And I left it with him and, like I said, that's kind of where
18 things went from there.

19 Q. Okay. And so when exactly did the mayor get involved?

20 A. This is going to sound great. City of Dallas, we are a city
21 manager run government. So the mayor is a figurehead, but he is
22 over the City Council. So just like, well, Saturday is when I
23 knew -- let me back up. Friday night I was getting some
24 information from his front man. I call him the armor bearer,
25 Scott Goldstein. He's the guy that **shouts** the mayor's coming, and
the mayor comes in. Going to get fired after this, and he was

1 me notes on, hey, what's up, what's the update? What's this and
2 that? And then I want to say it was Saturday morning Scott sent
3 something that he had given my information to, I think, it was
4 Mohammed, and I guess they heard the NTSB, you all were coming,
5 which I had a hunch you all were coming anyway when this thing
6 started. It didn't end that one time.

7 The next morning I was going, okay -- that's why I got
8 dressed and came back in. It's interesting because my daughter
9 had flown in for her birthday Sunday, and we had planned
10 all this stuff. That was all kind of **scrapped**. But that's how it
11 happens. When Ted's on call weird things happen. They're not going
12 to let
13 me do this anymore, which has happened, they say that, and they
14 still continue. But as you can tell, I have a little problem with
15 ADD, focusing on what you asked me.

16 Q. The mayor, he --

17 A. So Scott Goldstein was how he reached out to me. I never
18 talked to the mayor directly. It was through his email to his
19 underling to me.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. There have been some times where I've talked to him on the
22 phone, not with this event. And then our assistant city manager,
23 John Fortune, after that he kind of started taking the heat off of
24 me from those higher-ups, and I started communicating everything
25 directly to him. And they were pumping us for information because

1 the City Council members in this area, Medrano and Narvaez.
2 Narvaez, I can't say that right. He -- they're, you know, they
3 were getting all kind of -- wanting updates. And then they were
4 getting reports. It was kind of like playing post office. You
5 had people that were coming up with, oh, we had a fire over here,
6 a call over here. None of that was verified, but it was
7 everything from Hidalgo, and then even all the way over off of
8 Winnetka and West Dallas. It's in his district. Councilman
9 Medrano's district, and Councilman Narvaez district are long and
10 slender, and so they run almost from downtown city, all the area
11 all the way up to the northwest side of Love Field. So this is
12 his area.

13 Q. And that was Friday night they started inquiring about --

14 A. Friday night.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Yes, sir. Actually, it really started Friday. I guess when
17 the second round of evacuations kind of started when it -- they
18 had it cordoned, and then it, I don't want to say it jumped, but
19 really when it changed was when they decided they were going to
20 have to evacuate those apartments on Bolivar, and I think it's
21 called Bolivar Place and Over the Rainbow or something, and that
22 was 200 and some units. And we were, like, oh, goodness, here we
23 go. And then we get that kind of contained, and the next morning,
24 I guess, it jumped to -- and I may have my times off on that, but
25 it jumped to the other side of Marsh to the couple of streets that

1 are kind of parallel or linear in line with Espanola and Durango.
2 It's the other side, but it's a little bit south, I think, or
3 west, I guess that would be.

4 Q. All right. Okay.

5 A. Yeah. So mayor is a figurehead, city manager runs it. You
6 know, council members, people, press wearing you out. So it was
7 just trying to get everything even on our end wrapped up and
8 figured out and -- and that's why, you know, I don't want to sound
9 like I'm kicking Atmos because I'm going to kick ourselves too as
10 far as the fire department, but I knew there was a dark period.
11 There literally was a dark period where maybe they thought it was
12 down turning. Maybe we all did. I know we did. And then I think
13 they got their game legs back up under them, and kind of going
14 from there.

15 Q. Friday, was it raining then?

16 A. It was kind of like it's doing right now, misting and
17 raining. We had rain that came in really hard, I want to say
18 around 7:30. That's why I was glad -- we had some cold weather so
19 that's why I was glad we had buses out there just because at that
20 time we had people lined up trying to get in.

21 There's a lot of frustration over that. People were going to
22 the various, I don't want to say checkpoints, but barricades, and
23 then being routed all the way around to that northwest, west
24 corner where the command post was so they could feed in from
25 there. So, and at that time I was asked, what do we let them do?

1 And I said, all I want to do is allow them to get their pets, any
2 necessary medicines, and if there's any -- something of
3 significance. It's not to go get your clothes and cousin's toys
4 and all that. Because I was thinking of the pure volume of how
5 many people that would be.

6 Something else that I had told to Chief Johnson, I said get
7 with our shop, which is where our maintenance facility is, and get
8 their extra Suburbans that we have in reserve. Bring those out
9 there where we can pony people in, not have to -- I even thought
10 about, and I didn't -- I spoke with Mark Combs when I was at the
11 scene saying you think I need to get our all terrain vehicles in
12 here? We have those Gators that can run up and down. Because of
13 the alleys, I didn't know where the people had houses. A lot of
14 these have been cut up and redone. And he said, I don't think
15 we're going to be here that long. I said, okay, because I was
16 already thinking long term streets being closed because the dirt
17 and stuff. We can get over that a lot easier than a Suburban.
18 And I knew there's a lot of elderly that we weren't going to be
19 able just to walk up to their house. So that's kind of the
20 thought process. But I didn't intend on it to be a -- at least in
21 my mind an extended, let me go get my socks and underwear and 15
22 different garments and so forth.

23 Q. Last question for this. Did you -- have you ever seen
24 something similar? Like have you ever seen an incident like this?

25 A. Yes, ma'am.

1 Q. Similar to the Friday incident?

2 A. Yes, ma'am. I've seen houses pop. I've seen -- I've been on
3 deployments up in -- we've had some in Garland. We had some in
4 McKinney. I've been on Task Force 1 when we had, heck, Katrina
5 and Rita. We had gas lines blowing and stuff everywhere. I --
6 yes, ma'am. I've seen stuff like that all over.

7 Q. Okay. So it wasn't really a surprise like?

8 A. Not to me, no.

9 Q. All right.

10 A. I mean, when I got there, you know, I'm listening to what's
11 going on. When I got there, there was no doubt in my mind that we
12 had had a gas explosion.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Just due to the lack of fire damage. There was none. And
15 what I had seen of an implosion/explosion inside. It wasn't
16 imploded. It was pushed out. And just the force of the debris
17 and things. It -- no doubt to my mind.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. And that's what, like I said, that's one reason I came to the
20 scene when I'm -- all the things I was telling you, I had kind of
21 checklist in my head. That morning on Friday I was asking
22 dispatch to run me some reports over what was -- been in that area
23 related to that. Because when I heard explosion, I was thinking
24 was it a fire or what? Then when I start seeing, well, they had a
25 couple other fires.

1 And so on the fire side, I'm already making mental notes
2 going why wouldn't A plus B equal C, kind of put together in this
3 area. And then do we have several different companies? Which
4 happened. I see who is answering what. Are they not
5 communicating? Are we not getting a picture of that? You start
6 having clusters, just like with fire fatalities, you go, okay, why
7 am I having so many here?

8 I've seen that -- you know, when I got over to arson we had --
9 (indiscernible) we had a area northwest of Dallas up off Audelia
10 and all that I noticed we had a lot of geriatric fatalities in
11 probably a 10-block area. And I did some more investigation,
12 chased it down. Well, all those homes were built in the late '70s.
13 A lot of them have aluminum wiring. They had Federal Pacific fuse
14 panels that had been recalled, and most of that area are retired
15 and geriatric, actually widows, and having fires at night and
16 unable to get out. And so we were able to go in the neighborhood,
17 do a home safety and do some checks and things.

18 So, but you look for clusters of why. Things don't just --
19 you don't have things like this that just happen, and go, oh,
20 God's green earth. That's what happened.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. There's a reason.

23 Q. All right, thank you.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No questions.

25 MR. PADGETT: 20 minutes. I went too far.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't have any.

2 MR. PADGETT: Oh, good. Look at that.

3 DR. JENNER: Tell you what. Why don't we take a 5, 10-minute
4 break, and we'll regroup.

5 (Off the record.)

6 (On the record.)

7 DR. JENNER: We're back on the record.

8 BY DR. JENNER:

9 Q. Okay. You've been a group member in the last couple of days
10 in several interviews, and you've heard what we've heard, and as
11 much as you're comfortable with, we'd like to go back and get your
12 -- sort of your opinion and your impression of the two other
13 incidents that are sort of related to this. And there's one that
14 occurred on February 21st and one on February 22nd. So I'll just
15 throw it over to you.

16 A. Okay.

17 Q. About the February 21st incident, and based on what you've
18 learned, and what's your take away from all that?

19 A. Well, as chief of staff, my job again is to always look for
20 needs and improvements and things that maybe we need to shore up
21 on our end as far as fire and rescue. So I'll start with that.
22 Based on what I saw -- can we hang on one second? **Can I take this**
23 **from Chief Coatney?**

24 (Off the record.)

25 (On the record.)

1 MR. PADGETT: All right, so we're back.

2 DR. JENNER: We're back.

3 MR. PADGETT: We're fixing to get jukebox jerking, the percolator
4 perking, get out of the way 'cause you can't go wrong. I'm gonna
5 play your song here on WTOP. Dallas area weather today, partly
6 cloudy 20 percent chancerain. Overnight low 43, high today 65.

7 Back -- the ADD issue, squirrel. What I have seen related to
8 the fire department, as I stated earlier, I asked our dispatch,
9 our communications to go back and pull runs that are kicked out by
10 our computer assisted dispatch, CAD. Go back and research CAD, and
11 find me codes that are gas leaks, gas in the area, investigations,
12 fires in this parameter. And off the top of my head, I want to say
13 -- I've got some .pdfs of that now, but I want to say there's been
14 -- and I had them run that back to Friday, I believe, the 16th, if
15 that's right. And so essentially I went back a week, and I want to
16 say we had 12 hits, 11 or 12. I say that. I'd have to count but
17 off the top of my head. And they ranged everything from a gas
18 smell to some fires to the three particular that you're asking me.

19

20 BY DR. JENNER:

21 Q. And I'm sorry. Just what time period did you go --

22 A. I went back to -- I asked them to roll back to Friday, I
23 believe, it was February 16th. I think that's the exact week from
24 Friday, wasn't it? Yeah. Friday was the 23rd. So, yeah. And
25 CAD came back with -- this area that we had highlighted came back

1 with -- and, again, this is off the top of my head, 11 or 12
2 incidents, including the 2 that you had -- that actually were on
3 Durango behind the house on Friday.

4 So this is where I shifted into my arson investigator mode.
5 So I'm thinking, what would I do? And so when you ask me, I'm
6 being introspective here. Number one, I need to reprioritize the
7 fact that hazmat rolls on unknowns and gas leaks of any
8 consequence. They can always be turned around by the companies,
9 if you know Atmos is there, and I hate to say it, if it's a meter
10 in the back alley or something that -- not that that's
11 insignificant, but that can be handled better than a full-scale.
12 Atmos knows what they're doing. And I think some of our troops
13 have just assumed -- you know, so we have protocols for that.

14 I made a note to actually make sure that we get that pounded
15 home. Because something I may not have said on the record, but
16 City of Dallas, we lose around 80, 85 firefighters a year. We
17 have close to 2,000. I think our authorized strength is 2163 to
18 be exact. But this past year we've lost a little over 260 in the
19 last calendar year, and our -- excuse me -- fiscal year. Our
20 calendar year, as of January, we're already 65 in the hole, and
21 it's typically because of some changes on the pension and an older
22 fire crew.

23 So we've had a number of promotions lately. So as you all
24 have maybe seen, we have a lot of new captains, new deputies, new
25 chiefs, a lot of youngers that are coming up, and the olders are

1 kind of rotating out. Firefighting is not a young man's or a
2 young woman's job for sure. So if you're out there on the rig and
3 climbing ladders and stuff it's difficult. So I don't know.
4 We've been doing a lot of officer in-service training. So this is
5 something that needs to come up on things that are outside of
6 normal fire calls and EMS calls. I'm very confident they can
7 handle that, but hazmat and USAR and swift water and things are --
8 and this just as a teaching point that hazmat -- whether they'd
9 have made a difference or not, I don't know, but on the initial
10 call that I was aware of Friday, I think they should have been
11 there and not turned back.

12 Now the second part is, I'm a little -- and I'll be honest,
13 I'm a little disappointed and irritated with the arson
14 investigators, their job is to determine origin and cause, and
15 they utilized a legalese, if you will, to say undetermined on a
16 couple fires that happened on Durango, which is proper, but in my
17 opinion they're paid to make decisions and they have the knowledge
18 to make decisions. And it seemed that they did everything but say
19 it was this or that. And, again, I can't get in their head and
20 say that, but based on the interviews and what I've heard and what
21 I have read, there's no doubt in my mind that we had an issue with
22 gas. And, therefore, it should have -- the pieces should have
23 been put together potentially sooner.

24 And I will even say that based on -- and I can't tell you who
25 I had the conversation with, but we had -- Atmos has had crews out

1 here, whether they were replacing some lines or whatnot, at least
2 that I know of Sunday or Monday prior to the fire. So that would
3 have been around the 17th, maybe 18th. Because I thought it was
4 odd that, well, it's a city holiday -- Presidents Day, I think,
5 was the 18th -- and they had crews that were out in this area.

6 So a good arson investigator will do a canvass of the
7 neighborhood. What's going on? Here's kind of the stuff. And I
8 think they thought it was a routine fire. It wasn't. We had a
9 back end burned out. We have a lot of fires every day. I mean, I
10 say a lot literally, and a lot of them are single-frame residence
11 like this, and you're kind of in and out. And I think they got --
12 in my opinion, they got complacent, maybe not individually, but as
13 collectively, as a whole, that they didn't share the information.

14 I know I heard one of the arson investigators, Captain
15 Westbrook, say -- I heard the Friday thing comment. I thought,
16 oh, yeah, I've had a fire over there, and I told such and such.
17 Well, especially not that they're short staffed, and they got
18 younger crews there, I would think they would be communicating
19 even more because a lot of them are doing double shifts and
20 things, and they should be able to put those pieces together.
21 Maybe I'm wrong on that, but I know historically the arson
22 investigators, every day they get up and they pull the evening
23 runs that they were not dispatched on, maybe car fires because we
24 have a lot of insurance claims. A lot of people dump cars here
25 and burn. So we're always having cases that we're working because

1 the insurance agencies and all.

2 And lot of counties around Dallas don't investigate car fires.
3 People don't know that. But they come to Dallas and all of a
4 sudden because we have the paying entities that are in the city of
5 Dallas, it becomes our case. And so we have a lot of cases, arson
6 cases working. Very proud of their clearance rate. But in this
7 case, I guess since it wasn't arson, it was kind of -- you know,
8 maybe that's not important. I don't know. I do know what needs
9 to be drilled home: I need more communication sharing and
10 information sharing between the respective arson investigators.

11 I will tell you that Chief Coatney and I since this has
12 occurred, have had personal discussions of putting firefighters
13 paired with arson investigators in the thought process to make
14 them arson investigators, just to give more tools to the existing
15 young people we have over there. Because firefighters are well
16 versed in building construction. They're well versed in --
17 typically have a working knowledge, let me put it that way, of
18 electrical, gas, things of that nature. Whereas, I didn't feel
19 like I heard that from the arson investigators that we heard from.
20 They may know that. I didn't feel like that was expressed. I
21 felt like you got more detail from the officers that are in the
22 field than you did from those that really should have more
23 details, with the exception of a few.

24 I thought Rene Molina was very good at what he did. His job
25 was interviewing and getting questions. I thought he asked

1 pertinent questions and pointed questions, and had good answers
2 for that, but that was the extent. It was like the military.
3 This is my lane, I'm not getting out either side. This is what I
4 was tasked to do, I did it. And he's very good at that. At his
5 current rank, he's not allowed to be the lead investigator. Rank
6 sometime -- I don't know, anyway.

7 So that needs to be looked at, the dynamics of that, and how
8 we do things. And even our promotional career path as inspectors,
9 code enforcement officers, fire marshals and then into arson. I'm
10 not sure that's the best path to go. A lot of cities do that.
11 Apparently Dallas has done it for years. I just feel like as a
12 firefighter, I know when I got over there as an arson
13 investigator, I was, you know, the first non-fire code guy that
14 came over there I had to learn all this. But lot of stuff that it
15 took them a long time to learn was just natural for a firefighter.
16 I mean, you see and process things without even realizing you're
17 doing it. So that was the second thing that I noticed.

18 I also wanted to, since we have new chiefs -- I know I made
19 some notes. I wanted to have a chiefs training. They already
20 have task books for those that are coming up. And I wanted -- I
21 don't know, little more maybe ownership of incidents and following
22 up instead of just coming back. And I don't know if they do this,
23 but kind of, you know, putting your feet up, and waiting on the
24 next call. Because in the fire service, we don't have the luxury
25 of making excuses or mistakes, quite frankly. And whether -- I

1 don't want to say mistakes, but some things were -- or some
2 oversight that didn't get done or some follow-ups that I think in
3 the best case would have occurred on the fire side.

4 Because I made some notes about how they make decisions.
5 Some things are planned, and other things are automatic. I want
6 them to be automatic where they're trained on things. You've
7 heard that from some of the officers we had, some of the others,
8 maybe not. Just the who, what, why, I thought that should have
9 been done under arson investigators.

10 I had a note here about leadership. Everybody's got a bad
11 day, but I wrote fix the problem. Don't become complacent and
12 quit or just that's not mine; I'll go home today, punch a clock.
13 **Let's** fix it. I want everybody to take on that role. So lot of
14 it has to do with leadership. I won't get into all that.

15 Has to do with expectations. I wrote a note here that I have
16 expectations from whether it's the person you're riding with in
17 the rig as an officer, what they have for you, the person in the
18 jump seat next to you, from your driver, your assistant on the
19 fire scene, from that officer, even what that officer expects from
20 his crew, and what we as command expect from our subordinates to
21 come from us. There's no gray line in our job, and I wrote that
22 in here. We have protocols, MOPs and SOPs for a reason. They're
23 not there just when we get in trouble to go look, but it needs to
24 be studied. And so that's something -- that's part of what I said
25 about acting versus reacting, planned and automatic. That needs

1 to be second nature.

2 It's important as a leader, I said I want -- some of these
3 that I saw did not have -- and maybe I don't have that, did not
4 have a command presence. I had notes that I wrote that it's -- as
5 a leader you always look to have that command presence. And I
6 feel like when everything, as I stated, is kind of going to pot,
7 it's my job to be the steady rock, and kind of -- and I've been
8 blessed. God's blessed me when things are flying, everything kind
9 of slows down for me, and I -- just tells you how old I am, I go
10 to a Rolodex in my head, you know, kind of seen that, done that.
11 Here, it's going here. Or never seen that, let me write that
12 down. But it's all about being easy going, remaining positive,
13 confident, in control at all times.

14 Some of our arson personnel came across with that persona,
15 but I think that was a guise because I don't think there's a lot
16 of depth there. Even what's their confidence level, and what is
17 their comfort level at what they do? I had a note there. How --
18 that's something else. Our arson people, I want them to get their
19 curriculum vitae, however you say that, get that listed. Because
20 some of them came in here, and they said I did this or this. I
21 think it's important for them to be able to punch to their
22 training records or whatever it is.

23 There's a lot of stuff I'll provide for you all for the
24 people that have asked, hazmat and things like that. But that
25 ought to be something, because maybe they have never testified in

1 court, but I have for a number of things, and that's something
2 they're going to dig into, and it's important to get it out there
3 and then make yourself a -- hate that word -- subject matter
4 expert, but you can at least be confident in what you're doing,
5 and know that you've done it right.

6 They should also know -- going back to arson. I was amazed
7 that none of them **spoke** about the scientific method and how they
8 **investigate**. I heard them talk about we go from least burned to
9 most burned. And maybe they knew that, but I think it was
10 imperative for them to delineate the steps on how they do
11 investigations, and had they had followed that, in my opinion, they
12 would have come to these conclusions that I think were glaringly
13 obvious, at least in my mind. So maybe they need to brush upon their
14 **skills**. A whole list of notes here. I'm sorry. Everybody is
15 accountable for the action of their subordinates, and this
16 includes everything starts and ends with you. It's just like I've
17 told our officers, I can only control what I can control. But as
18 I alluded to earlier, I trust everybody. There are some people
19 that have taken so many withdrawals that I have to verify
20 everything they say. And I alluded to that earlier, I feel the
21 same way with a lot of contractors and vendors and/or in this case
22 Atmos. I trust what they say, but I want to verify just because
23 I'm making decisions not just for Ted, but for basically 2100
24 firefighters in the city in that particular case.

25 We have a breakdown **of** communications. We have a lot of

1 things going in different areas, and not really explaining why or
2 what on both sides, but with our fire operations personnel and our
3 arson personnel, and even command staff, It just goes back to the
4 three C's, and I jotted them here, clear, concise and confirmed.
5 I always want to make sure that they heard that because they --
6 kind of like this center here on Grundy, I had OEM, Kevin Oden,
7 which I know is a great guy, said, yeah, I got it. Okay. I
8 didn't worry about that because Kevin's always been Johnny on the
9 spot.

10 But then when I -- Lauren and I were here sitting there doing
11 twiddle thumbs, I called Ms. Ross, who is the Parks department
12 representative. She works downtown. I said -- she goes, well,
13 our people don't show up until 9. I said, well, didn't Kevin call
14 you? Yeah, but he never really gave me a time; I didn't know. So,
15 again, got to confirm that, all right, you told me you got it. I
16 have people here at such and such time. Just like yesterday. And
17 obviously they moved us from here to there. That happened just by
18 somebody here, but I was told B. I didn't know they had the Rec
19 Centers or whatever doing their EMS or flip-flopping.

20 So SOPs, making sure everything is standardized. I wrote in
21 here is it lack of experience or training? If it's training,
22 that's my obligation. If it's -- if they're on the job, it's
23 their obligation. But I offered it to them because fire and depth
24 and all that, that's not stupid; firefighters are, but we can
25 learn.

1 Some of the signs, I don't know if -- just one thing I think
2 in the history of this department that has changed, but when I
3 came on, rookies and nozzle men/women, were to be on the line and
4 not to speak about anything they saw or whatever. You pass that
5 through your chain of command. You don't even talk unless I talk
6 to you. That's old school. And all the companies I have
7 throughout -- we have a rank structure for a reason. Take the
8 hits, but they also get the glory when it's something they've done
9 right. But everybody that worked for me knew they can speak
10 freely, and I don't take offense to that. I learn just as well as
11 anybody, but I expect them -- because that's the only way they're
12 going to learn, and lot of times they'll see things that maybe I
13 don't see as an incident commander.

14 I heard Horacio Garcia here saying, did you see Atmos running
15 around in the back? Well, all he knew was the guy came back and
16 said the gas was off. Well, I also knew that Mark Combs, that's
17 the first thing the truck company captain does. He went **and** when
18 he thought he had gas, he cut the gas off himself. That's why the
19 Atmos guy didn't take too long. He went around, probably
20 verified, yeah, it's off, did his thing, came around. But
21 Horacio, like he said, I got a lot of other things going on. Well,
22 in this particular case he had already **assumed** I got ambulances. I
23 got this and that. What else was there, other than following some
24 steps and clearing up and getting back? So I want to make sure
25 that everybody is on the page with what their

1 responsibilities are for the various rank structures. Because the
2 buck does stop with them. And we have people, public, industry,
3 whoever, looking at us, and even your own personnel that are
4 going, okay, I want to be like that, I don't want to be like that.

5 And so I think we should have picked up on the gas odor calls
6 in the neighborhood, number of calls just from these stations that
7 answered. They work with each other so much, I think there should
8 have been something like that.

9 The utility notifications on the fire alarms, we call them
10 boxes, that has been being made. Maybe that needs to be an
11 automatic, and then we can turn them back around. Because I know
12 in this case Atmos or even **Oncor** they don't run Code 3. So lot
13 of times we're still fighting fire with lines arcing and gas
14 going, things. And that's one reason we do carry gas tools.
15 That's a little easier to take care of. We can find a meter at
16 industrial park or whatever. We're shutting off everything we
17 have.

18 Gas meters, we at one time had them on all our chiefs cars.
19 We still now do. I didn't hear a battalion chief, one, say that
20 they utilized -- they have 4-gas meters on there specifically for
21 incidents like this, and/or overhaul where they can come in and --
22 you know, we put in specially gas meters for carbon monoxide.
23 Obviously that's standard on 4-gas, but also for hydrogen cyanide
24 for after **and** overhaul activities, just because of the influx of
25 cancer and other problems. I didn't hear any of them say that.

1 At one time we pulled them off all the rigs. We had them on
2 engines and stuff. They were never being used. We had people
3 that were pulling 4-gas meters thinking it was a methane detector.
4 And we had -- hazmat has the PIDs because methane is up on that
5 higher scale on the ionization potential. So they have the
6 special bulbs. I think it's an 11-7. Most of them run with a 10-
7 3 or something, and that can see pretty much everything except
8 those higher ends. But none of that was utilized. I didn't hear
9 that.

10 They may have carbon monoxide detectors, and I have seen even
11 when I've ridden out in the field just to stay up, crews pull
12 things off, and I go, why are you taking that in? Oh, yeah, we
13 got a gas leak. You taking carbon monoxide in because you think
14 maybe we got carbon monoxide buildup? And then they'll realize,
15 yeah, that's why I'm doing it. And that's fine. Because carbon
16 monoxide lot of times when gas is out **occurs** it's like I was
17 concerned, I still am, what's going on in the neighborhood is the
18 minute we let them back in their house, if they don't have gas and
19 it's going to be cold tonight, they're going to cook one way or
20 the other. And I've seen everything from charcoal in the house to
21 bringing in their turkey fryer or whatever and using propane
22 tanks, and carbon monoxide goes out the door. And we've had
23 issues with that.

24 Matter of fact, one of those calls that has happened recently
25 was a carbon monoxide off of one of the streets north of here.

1 And I think it might have been because they turned something off,
2 and I don't know, I didn't follow up on that in particular. I
3 just noticed that the other day.

4 All right. I think there should have been a better sketch of
5 the home and layout, and I'm hoping that when I get the arson
6 reports that they will have better layouts on the individual
7 structures. One of the structures, the one on Friday, I
8 understand, because it was compromised that they weren't
9 comfortable going in. Again, that goes back to understanding
10 building construction. But the other two, in my opinion, there
11 wasn't an excuse.

12 I am dismayed that -- a heater doesn't just miracle itself
13 out of the world. I've heard that come up. No one knows where
14 that is. If the individual didn't have fragmentation on him, a
15 heater didn't just dissolve itself. I mean, if it's a typical,
16 and making assumption, space heater that was in the wall, gas fed
17 from the '50s and '60s like they were, I should see some ceramic
18 debris. I should see some, you know, some of the braiding that's
19 in there. I should see some of **it**, even the vermiculite blocks
20 that are in there to keep the **heat** I should see that somewhere.
21 A good arson investigator should have chased that down.

22 I heard them describe the bathroom and this, that and the
23 other, but I don't know where it is. And they said everything is
24 up on the roof. You get a ladder set off a truck. Even if you're
25 using a arrow you don't have to get in the structure. Get up

1 there and get a picture. But, again, this was a, quote/unquote,
2 routine fire. So that's something.

3 I want every one of our arson investigators, I want the
4 ignition source determined. And the way to do that -- I didn't
5 hear any of them say I ruled out all the possible -- when you have
6 an undetermined, that also means you've ruled out every other
7 possible alternative or not? I get our protocol here is if you
8 have a fatality they'll leave it undetermined just by the chance
9 new info. In this case, I think it was very obvious. They said
10 the person had no obvious external injuries, little cuts and
11 scrapes, but the young lady on Friday died from the concussion
12 wave of a blast. It just tore up her insides. And she was a
13 little petite thing, so that was reasonable. And I heard she
14 slept in the LR. I didn't know that, but the protection, the fact
15 there was no wall there from where the, I assume, water heater
16 was, et cetera. I don't know.

17 So I also heard, and I wrote this quote down from one of our
18 arson investigators that they said this was the third incident in
19 that area so I paid more attention. I wrote that down as a quote.
20 That's concerning to me because you should be paying more
21 attention to everything if that's the case. I need to know we're
22 going to get that. Talked about the layouts, photos, interior
23 sketches, just case files, you know, just origin and cause. I
24 hate to keep pounding on that, but come on! Understanding fire
25 dynamics as arson investigators, even firefighters on what flames
mean. I heard no opinion a lot of

1 times. Okay. They're asking you for your opinion, you have an
2 opinion, good, bad, indifferent. That's how we learn. And I
3 heard an arson investigator say that they couldn't take pictures
4 or they did take pictures, I heard both, because the ground was
5 all snowed up. Meaning, we had foam on-site. That foam
6 dissipates after a while. That's their job as an arson
7 investigator to maintain the scene until you get what you need,
8 and then you can release it.

9 Oh, just food for thought. For our department, we had a
10 breach in our battalion chief's MDCs. You kind of heard that. So
11 we had a period where, like Scott Clumpner, they were going into
12 this fire blind, didn't have all the data lot of times they have.
13 We had just had that on Wednesday. So we had a malware that got
14 into some of the battalion chiefs cars on their mobile computers
15 just because they used a generic password. They got hacked. And
16 that was a case in point that firefighters will run through that
17 wall for you, but they're not the sharpest knives in the drawer.
18 It's just easy to just put "Station 35" or "password" or whatever
19 it is, you know, a third grader could hack into this stuff.

20 So we've gotta learn just a note for us. We've gotten with
21 our communication information services and made sure that that's
22 been shored up. Changed passwords and things, and given new
23 edicts on that. But I heard that kind of come into play with
24 Scott. It didn't impact his decision making, but he was not able
25 to see normally what he would see, comments or maybe some old
calls.

1 There's a lot of information that gets pushed out to them on the
2 mobile data terminals, and that's on all of our rigs.

3 I was very pleased with the fire officers that you did
4 interview. I thought they were -- I won't say rock stars, but I
5 thought they explained everything that they did very well. It was
6 a logical progression, systematic with what they were doing. A
7 lot of them told you I've never seen this before, that's to be
8 explained, but I thought even based on those circumstances did
9 very well. And to a T most of them said I'm relying on Atmos
10 because they're the subject matter experts. We encourage that.
11 If there's something that you're not sure about or you don't have
12 personal knowledge of, you still put that in the back of your
13 head, but you follow what's here. They did that to a point all
14 the way through.

15 I think we've learned here that it's not over till it's over.
16 I realized how many other city entities have been involved.
17 There's been parks, DART, PIOs, streets. Even to the point where,
18 I guess, it was Saturday when I got called, and heard people were
19 going back in their house unescorted, and that was one thing I
20 remember telling Captain Combs is that I wanted some of those
21 street barricades there. And we had police there. That that
22 house wasn't to be entered, just because of the structural
23 integrity. And then I hear -- it's kind of like when people think
24 we're leaving, streets comes picks up their barricades. I need
25 this back on the shelf, and this looks good here, so let's go.

1 And so maybe it's good to communicate to whoever they may be that
2 you don't pull anything off until the fire department comes to you
3 and says we're out of here 100 percent. That's some more
4 communications. Okay. So that's fire department. That's a lot.

5 On the other side, I felt as I alluded to earlier, and I'm not
6 trying to kick anybody. I'm just being honest here, because I've
7 poked our own self in the eye. I felt like as I've stated it took
8 Atmos a while to get on top of this. I understand the contacts I
9 had, they weren't meant to be the down and dirty on the scene, but
10 the people that our troops spoke with on the scene, a lot of them
11 were contractors and didn't really have intel you know, who am I
12 reporting to? They probably know where to get their paycheck from,
13 but they don't know who is the Grand Puba. And so it may have been
14 that that dark period was just them trying to get up. But I need
15 to reiterate I need somebody that's at my hip to be able to answer
16 questions whether from myself or underlings.

17 I thought that Atmos is doing outstanding now. I felt that
18 they had dropped the ball probably just due to fatigue and the
19 lack of personnel with the public relations aspect coming out of
20 the gate. The fact that we had this center open here, and it was
21 like they kind of just handed it to Red Cross and walked away as
22 far as the PR part. Now I know the troops are out there working,
23 but we had a public that had all kind of questions and answers
24 they wanted. I didn't have those to give them. The City Manager
25 didn't have those to give them because I wasn't given anything,

1 and I wasn't getting anything from Atmos. And I didn't want to
2 burn Atmos in the press, and say we're not getting anything from
3 them. And I'm telling you all that in here because these have
4 been very good partners at least in my tenure. So we all have had
5 days, and like I said, I felt like it was just a while for them to
6 get up to speed on what's going on.

7 I'm not sure that I was given the whole truth from the start.
8 That bothers me because I think it was much bigger or they had an
9 assumption it was much bigger because of the amount of work I saw
10 going on prior to the event being **started**, the event I call as
11 Friday. They didn't just dig those holes an hour before I got
12 there. There was a lot of work going on in a big area prior to
13 Friday. So whether that was planned pipeline change-outs, I don't
14 know. I just think it's awful convenient. Let's put it that way.

15 I admire Atmos because this is poking them in the eye really
16 for taking care of these people, putting them in hotels. It
17 probably **was a room** some of them have never been in before. It's
18 probably nicer digs than they've ever had. But they're doing
19 everything they can to take care of them, and so I applaud them
20 for that. They've been very forthright with information since.
21 And that's being filtered in different ways. It's still, like
22 anything of this magnitude, which just started as a little mole
23 hill and now it's big, there's all kind of things to fix on the
24 communications side. Getting ahead of it, as I stated, I've
25 learned that over the years. Just getting the press and the PR

1 groups together, and then getting them on your side to pump out
2 information is a lot better than invoking what sells. And I said
3 earlier, if you have a picture of a dog and the Pope and something
4 about a fire, that's going to be the evening news. And around
5 here, especially when people cannot speak and English is not their
6 first language, and I'm using that just kind of generically --
7 that's troublesome. Because now it's just what I know is word of
8 mouth, and what you're telling me, by the time it gets around
9 there is something worse.

10 So I think we were very lucky both for everyone involved
11 that we had one fatality, and luckily not any super serious
12 injuries. I mean, we had people injured, we had people burned,
13 but the fact that we lost a life, little bit here or there that
14 may not have occurred, that's going to bother me just because I'm
15 wondering what on the fire department's side could we have done
16 to prevent that.

17 Other entities. I think the police department has been very
18 responsive, as they always are. That's one thing here in Dallas
19 I'm proud of. Police and fire work together real well. DART,
20 Parks Department, the city managers up top, they all have
21 different specialties. Our city manager that we deal with
22 actually assistant city manager, he deals with police, fire, the
23 criminal court system and the Office of Emergency Management. So
24 we had a handle on knowing who we are. It's always good to put
25 faces with names. And I think this is an experience that you've

1 heard it works.

2 Kind of like Captain Baker said, something I've always
3 believed in, that's why I've told them kind of go forth and
4 prosper, you build those relations before things happen. That way
5 you know when you're hearing something from someone that you know
6 you don't have to sit there and go what's this guy all about or
7 what's this girl all about or what's their angle? You just take
8 what they're saying and go. And like I said, if something comes
9 out of that where it's different, that's when I go back to that I
10 got to verify. And that's why, and this is not reflective of the
11 current management of Atmos, but even back Lone Star days, Lone
12 Star Gas days, we -- I used to have guys that would come out and
13 just jump down in there with their blue jeans and Wrangler boots
14 and work on a line. I'm getting readings that are just
15 astronomical, we're all in bunker gear.

16 And then years ago, we had a explosion on Eads and Eight
17 Street over in south Dallas, and burned one of the Atmos guys. I
18 guess actually it was Lone Star then, I think. Burned him up
19 pretty good. Actually, I think, he ended up dying. And from then
20 on they're always wearing Nomex and all their protective gear. So
21 it takes something to change, but people, kind of like little
22 kids, they just kind of keep **thinking** okay, I don't need this, I
23 don't need this.

24 So what can we fix? Lots of things. Fire department has got
25 a lot of shoring up to do; MOPs, training records. I'm very proud

1 of the fact that we do have a lot of toys and a lot of things to
2 bring to the party. I feel like some of those were not utilized
3 here in a timely fashion. But overall I'm happy with what we did.
4 We can always improve, everybody. And that comes through
5 communication and making sure that we know what the focus is. I
6 think that's about it.

7 Q. Great. Really appreciate that.

8 A. That was a lot.

9 Q. Right. I just want to hit on just a couple things that you
10 didn't mention. And we, of course, we've only interviewed on the
11 fire and rescue side. We haven't interviewed any on the gas
12 company side. But from what you've heard so far in the interviews
13 and in other venues, how was the -- at least for the first two
14 incidents, how do you rate the communication between the gas
15 company and the fire department and arson?

16 A. I don't have personal knowledge of that. So, again, I'm
17 going to make an assumption, and you know how that works. But it
18 sounded like it was routine typically like we have. Now I don't
19 want to put words in anyone's mouth, but in my mind, and you're
20 asking me my opinion, I think there were some balls dropped on
21 both sides. I think there was communication from the parties that
22 were there, maybe the worker bees together, but nobody kind of
23 talked. I'm sure -- well, I know for a fact on our side a lot of
24 the same and then different and nobody really put pieces together.
25 The one thing that was constant was Atmos is a company, fire

1 a company, we were both there. Now why pieces weren't
2 put together, I don't know.

3 But communication, that's always a problem. So can I say
4 that was great? No. Obviously, in retrospect things could maybe
5 be followed up a little better. It looks like we had this. Was
6 it on the homeowner's end or was it something you're doing? Maybe
7 if there -- and I'm not saying there was -- if there was some
8 knowledge beforehand by in this case Atmos that there's something
9 else that was a little hinky, that should have been shared with at
10 least the higher-ups.

11 Kind of like I'll use this analogy. When the police
12 department when their drug crews are doing a raid, they will reach
13 out to a commander in the fire service, keep tight lip -- you just
14 don't want it to get out, and we'll stand by it. So if it's
15 something like that, hey, if you got something going, you can tell
16 us on the down-low. We don't need to put it out in the wind for
17 the public. But some of the higher-ups may need to know that we
18 may have something here, and we could have maybe figured out a way
19 to work that a little better, hand-in-hand. I'm not saying that's
20 the case here, but in retrospect I think we could have some pieces
21 put together on both sides.

22 Q. Okay. With the advantage of retrospect and hindsight, are
23 you convinced or your opinion that each of the first two incidents
24 was gas related?

25 A. There's no doubt in my mind **though**. Based on what I heard its

1 a common denominator. And just the proximity. Like I said, I
2 haven't reviewed all of the 11 or 12 of the calls that were just
3 for that week. That's a pretty good indicator that there's
4 something that's out of whack. Because unless there's a -- just
5 like last night, a contractor that's maybe putting in some
6 fiberoptic or something and the line gets hit. You know, the one
7 last night was a 6-inch line. That's a good size line. There's a
8 lot of pressure on that. That happens a lot all over the city
9 with the growth. And we have people that are contracted to put in
10 -- heck, we've had city workers to hit lines that have been there.
11 Or maybe some old plats will show this, and actually the line is
12 over here.

13 That's one thing I've learned in my years here in Texas is
14 it's not like where I grew up. This clay soil down here, it goes
15 up and down, expands and contracts, and you can bury something 4,
16 5 feet down, and the next week it's up at the top. It blows my
17 mind how that happens. So that may have just been the case here
18 with all the rain and cold. And then we went from 20 degrees one
19 day literally to the next day it was 78. That's a lot of up and
20 down. So that's to be expected.

21 And that's why in my opinion polyethylene and the modern
22 piping systems are much better than the old ductile iron and cast
23 pipe and all the other things they just shoved in there just to
24 figure it out. So and that's the problem. This neighborhood is
25 old.

1 Q. Okay. And again with the advantage of hindsight just after
2 the first incident, if things went perfectly the way you would
3 have wanted them to go, was there enough information there to be
4 concerned and sort of put out a communication with the gas company
5 that you have something significant here?

6 A. I don't think so. And I say that because of this. Because
7 we have incidents involving a flash or a fire in a house that
8 occurs for who knows what reasons, and it is not by fault of any
9 provider. Maybe user error. Maybe I thought I had the pilot
10 light on or a fan blew the pilot out or something. Who knows. Or
11 I thought I had clicked it, and the igniter didn't come on. I
12 answered a phone call, and then we had some pop.

13 So one -- but then when you say that to me you've got to look
14 at the totality of everything that was around in that area. So if
15 I'm an officer on the rig, and I'm on my p's and q's, which again
16 one time to me is not out of the ordinary. So my ears really
17 don't perk up on that. Had it been a fatality, yes, you start
18 digging. Fatalities we -- or significant serious injury, which
19 I'm not downplaying a second degree burn, but the -- when you say
20 explosion and a roof is gone and things, that doesn't make sense.
21 So you go, okay, what's the common denominator?

22 So I would have been well served, I think, from our officers
23 to kind of -- they know that district. What's different today
24 that wasn't the other week? Oh, I see. Looks like the -- holes
25 where they're digging out in the desert or whatever for gold or

1 something, there's a lot of holes there, there's a reason. Do we
2 think there's a leak? That I would have either pushed -- if I was
3 in the field I'd have pushed to my command or I would have made
4 calls myself just to try to find out. But, no, I wouldn't have,
5 based on the first one.

6 The second one was just two houses down. Now my ears have
7 perked up. Even after the fact with a fire, and I look and two
8 houses down I see, oh, B shift was there. Even if I'm on another
9 shift, that doesn't happen unless we have an arsonist around, and
10 that has happened. You have things, those Molotov cocktails,
11 whatever, they set things, and it goes up. But typically it's in
12 -- it's a reason. You see it during tax time. Okay. We're not
13 quite there. End of the year, holidays. You see vengeful,
14 spiteful fire. There's all kind of reasons, but there's got to be
15 something there that precipitates that.

16 And in this case I'm here in this house, and I look just two
17 houses down we got a problem. Then I see in the alley there's
18 some digging going on. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to go
19 something's up. So it's a lot different from having an electrical
20 range than it is to have a gas stove. That's the best to cook on,
21 by the way. So --

22 Q. Okay. So let's say, again, if things went perfectly the way
23 you would have liked them, after the second incident, you --

24 A. The second incident.

25 Q. Yes. And so now you have the second and the first.

1 A. Okay.

2 Q. What actions would you have taken from that point on?

3 A. Personally, if things went well, the second one, like I
4 stated just a minute ago, having seen a house two doors down,
5 literally two doors down, that had a fire that had an injury that
6 was transported, and then having an explosion, injury at this
7 house, and then hearing the statements from what the arson
8 investigators got or even the guys that were putting him in the
9 ambulance, you know, this thing rolled over, flashed over, this
10 one blew up, whatever, yeah, your head should have been on swivel.
11 And that should have then caused somebody to reach out, whether it
12 was up the chain, even to my level or at least to the deputy's
13 level or at least to the battalion chief's level to say chase down
14 what's going on.

15 And so, yeah, if all things worked perfectly, I would have
16 had arson investigators that would have done a ringdown. I would
17 have had a redundancy where the troops in the field had
18 communicated, and then put that together to realize there's
19 something a little bit different here. And since that was 2 days
20 before the fatality, who knows. But in my mind, you put those two
21 pieces together, maybe we can -- just like we've done now, shut
22 the gas off, make an evacuation, figure out what's quite there,
23 get some readings, what's going on. It's not a normal -- that is
24 not normal.

25 Q. Right.

1 A. In a city this large to have fires that are similar in what
2 caused them, and, again, cause and origin, had that been
3 communicated, bam bam. So --

4 Q. Right. Because we have incidents 21st, 22nd --

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. -- 23rd.

7 A. Third, all --

8 Q. So this was the day before the big one. So --

9 A. Actually it was --

10 Q. All that --

11 A. Actually it was -- yes. Yes, sir. You're right.

12 Q. Could all of that what you've just described been done on the
13 22nd and elevated up the chain? I'm just trying to get a reading
14 what's your perspective.

15 A. Yes, sir. I think that could have -- it would have caused
16 some, I want to say at least some exploratory discussions on
17 what's going on. And I think it would have been pertinent, not
18 only for the neighborhood, but even for the fire crews to know
19 this is an anomaly.

20 Now is that on any one individual? No. It's a totality of
21 things that were just -- it's kind of like I hate to use that
22 adage the old Swiss cheese, when you got all the holes, until
23 everything lines up and somebody gets bit, it's not a problem.
24 But in this case, weather, issues, it just all lined up, and none
25 of that was seen until after the fact.

1 Now we're on top of it. And, unfortunately, that's life. I
2 wish it would have been caught sooner though at least in
3 communications, some talks.

4 And really, again, another bad thing is this is a weekend.
5 Most people, City Hall, 4:00, they're gone. I was down there late
6 because things were still going on. It's hard. And, I mean, in
7 this case Atmos that's a business. They probably already got
8 their marching orders, here's what we're doing. It's hard to get
9 people that can pull strings, because what we have seen on scenes
10 you'll get people, and they're not the supervisor that can
11 authorize whatever it is. We're talking about money. That's what
12 -- that's why people are in business. I get that. I'm not saying
13 that was the driving factor, but weekends it's hard to get things
14 done on a weekend.

15 Q. Going to change directions just a bit, and we heard three
16 unusual observations. And if I can get your comment on or your
17 expertise. One was the red flame where there should have been a
18 blue. One was this flash fire when the person was cooking that
19 was unexpected. And the third was sort of a fire under the
20 floorboard. And could you just talk about those?

21 A. Yeah. Okay. So red flame. Anybody that's had fire school
22 or even hazmat you know the different color flames, which what are
23 the heats, what's caused it. But in this case when you're dealing
24 with something, especially all of them, the common denominator
25 dealing with a stove and burning or a space heater, when you have

1 a red flame or a orange flame even, that's incomplete combustion.
2 It tells you you've got an issue there either with gas flow or
3 you've got some type of oxygenation that's been, I guess, put in
4 there in pressure, and you're not getting a true flow of gas,
5 natural gas. When the gas is pure, you'll have a nice pretty blue
6 flame with a nice white tip and kind of a black circle, if you
7 will, at the top of the flame. That's a good hot flame. That's
8 the way gas should burn.

9 The individual said he saw a red flame, and then it just
10 flashed over him. That tells me that he had probably a high level
11 of gas per volume in his house or area, confined space, and that
12 it was too rich at one time to flash. I think he had actually, as
13 we would say in the industry, finally sucked air and got what it
14 needed to do the fa-voomp, and then all the fuel is gone. So now
15 it's just building up again waiting to get another breath of
16 whatever is out there. So you go from that flammable range down
17 to where it's too lean, too rich. I think it was too rich. It
18 got back in that flammable range, and it lit off.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. On the fire underneath the pier and beam, I think that should
21 have been, and I think that was alluded to, that's a very --
22 that's different. You don't see that unless you've got some type
23 of hydrocarbon or flammable liquid. Typically hydrocarbons that
24 you have poured -- because the specific gravity of hydrocarbon is
25 obviously when the water and all that's going to float on the

1 liquid. So here in Texas it's dirt. You're going to have mud and
2 water under there. It's going to typically pool to the top. It
3 could have been that burning off. Could have been a hydrocarbon.

4 But in this particular case, one thing I heard on that house
5 was they saw the gas feeder line to the residence that had been
6 displaced. And I think the flame that they may have been seeing
7 once that initial kaboom went, it disjointed that, and I think
8 they had that void that had filled up maybe with gas again because
9 it was free flowing, I'm assuming. And the fact that the officer
10 said they got a call for a fire, and they saw a little smoke, and
11 then nothing. All of a sudden they had 40-foot flames or 20-foot
12 flames, whatever he said. That's unusual to go from zero to 100.
13 And then to see fire under the floorboard, that tells me something
14 is feeding it there. Is either -- because then he said it went
15 right out. They put water on it, boom. And as we know, if it's
16 free flowing that's why it was important to get the gas cut off.
17 It's probably just building up in that void, and it's just looking
18 for an ignition source.

19 So could that have happened before? Sure. I don't know.
20 Maybe they had -- maybe something had gotten disjointed before for
21 whatever reason. Especially in those areas, older homes, that's
22 just a void waiting to be filled with gas. It's trying to get up.
23 It's lighter than air. It's trying to get up and get out of
24 there, but it's confined by whatever box it's in.

25 DR. JENNER: Okay. Appreciate that, and I'm going to pass it

1 around.

2 MR. PADGETT: I went more than 20 minutes.

3 MS. GUNARATNAM: This is Rachael. I did have a question. I
4 got sidetracked.

5 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

6 Q. Oh. In many of the interviews that we heard, we heard people
7 did not smell gas. Do you think that was influenced by the
8 weather?

9 A. I think it was, but that's also -- that's puzzling to me. I
10 mean, there's a couple of things out of this that are puzzling to
11 me. One, where's the heater? Two -- it was kind of like Wendy's.
12 Where's the beef? Two, why was there no mercaptan smell? And I
13 know there's a small percentage of the public that cannot smell
14 that. That's why you do the banana oil test and different things.
15 But that's a classic. I mean, the whole reason that we have those
16 odors put in there is because of the fire that occurred at the
17 elementary school here in Texas. And back then they didn't put
18 odor in it, and nobody knew it was in the void. So we **now have** a
19 history lesson just here in Texas.

20 But that should have **smelled**. I think that should have been
21 something. And only thing I can put that to is (a) when it rains
22 here not only could that knock down the vapors, but it also
23 compacts the sand that gas lines are typically running in, which
24 is kind of like that's the whole reason we have all these oil
25 companies coming back and fracking those old oil holes because

1 they're busting up that sandstone and all to get the gas out. So
2 the fact that it's capped at one time, that doesn't mean it's not
3 there. You can pop it up again, it comes out. So we start having
4 rain and it's wet again today. We get a heavy rain
5 tonight or maybe tomorrow, and then we have 80 degrees come
6 Sunday, we may have a lot smelling. So I truly think because of
7 the rain we had, and the fact that it was either suppressing those
8 fumes or knocking them down. Because there is no way under God's
9 green earth that transmission lines from any company, in this case
10 Atmos, would be flowing through there without the odor in it. I
11 mean, I can see that on the front end before it gets to the
12 distribution hubs, but once that's added, that's not normal. So
13 that's the only thing I can equate that to is the weather.

14 Q. Right.

15 A. And the rainy time frame.

16 Q. Okay. And you said you gathered odor calls since February
17 16th. What was the area?

18 A. I had them dated and I pushed it out. It was to the original
19 date. I don't know why I don't have my map here. I guess I left
20 it in the car. Oh, actually, you know what, I can pull it up on
21 this. Stand by here. Give me a second. I had our computer group
22 pull the runs that were from the 16th. let me get it, let me get
23 it, let me get it. I apologize. I got --

24 Q. It's okay. You pulled it from February 16th to the 23rd?

25 A. Yes, ma'am. Let's see -- yesterday. Was yesterday Monday?

1 I've lost track of days.

2 Q. Yesterday was Monday.

3 A. Okay. Thank you. That's bad. Where am I? Did I wake up?
4 What's your name? I know that like the back of my hand. Whose
5 hand is that? Got all those one-liners, right.

6 Well, I didn't realize how many emails I had coming in. I
7 think it's interesting that Paradigm liaison is offering their dig
8 test class now. Just sent it out this week. Let's see here.

9 Q. You can get it to me afterwards. That's okay.

10 A. Okay.

11 Q. Yeah. Yeah.

12 A. Anyway, it was the 8-block area that I initially had asked it
13 to expand outside of what Atmos was saying.

14 Q. Right.

15 A. And it went up to -- basically went up to Foster Middle
16 School or Elementary School all the way down to Webb Chapel to
17 Larga over to Marsh.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. And so I told them if there's anything that's closer than
20 that because when they put a GIS circle they can kind of pull it
21 out if anything popped up kind of relative. Because at that time
22 we hadn't expanded it to Chapel Creek and across Marsh. So I just
23 told them in that area.

24 Now they're flagging everything that comes in. They're
25 notifying us, and saying, hey, we're making a run over here. Like

1 this morning, they had a car fire down there on Northwest Highway,
2 and they're just alerting Webb Chapel Command, they're calling it,
3 we got a car fire in case, you know, it's not related to what you
4 all are doing. So --

5 Q. Okay. And you said it was 12?

6 A. I'm sorry?

7 Q. You said it was 12 that --

8 A. I think, I think.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. I got the PDFs actually, and I'm going to have all that for
11 you all.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. It was either 11 or 12, and I've got numbers in my head that
14 are going everywhere. So don't quote me on that, but yes, ma'am.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. It was more than a handful.

17 Q. All right.

18 A. That's just for a week.

19 Q. Yeah. So if your staff had maybe seen that number, and then
20 February 21st happened, do you think maybe they would've had
21 communication --

22 A. Yeah. But, you know, and I don't --

23 Q. -- of a gas issue?

24 A. -- know if that's out there, but I don't know if there's a
25 program that can behind the scenes -- you know, like I told you

1 how many calls we make. I don't know if there's a program in our
2 computer assisted dispatch or out in the dispatch world of other
3 cities that can look at quantitative information, and then go
4 oops, we got an anomaly here. Kind of like Watson or whatever.
5 And go, hey, you've got a cluster here of something. This needs
6 attention. Danger, Will Robinson, need to look at that. I don't
7 know if that's there.

8 That would be nice for you or I to invent and sell it to
9 somebody. I think that would just help anybody. I mean, heck,
10 anybody would want that, but I don't think we have that
11 capability. It's only until I would say draw a box around this,
12 and give me some perspective.

13 Q. Right. Okay. Just last question. Do you have any
14 experience with methane or natural gas alarms?

15 A. Alarms?

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. Yes, ma'am. Fixed or handheld?

18 Q. Fixed.

19 A. Fixed sites. We have places, Praxair, we have Air-Liquide
20 (indiscernible), places like that that have fixed sites that have
21 monitoring equipment that's rolling 24/7. Worker safety and/or
22 the public, but yes, ma'am.

23 Q. And do you -- have you ever seen them used in residential --

24 A. As far as methane, I know there's some on the market by Kidde
25 and some of the others. I don't know if I hold a lot of stock in

1 that.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Simply because of, I won't say user error, but same thing on
4 the carbon monoxide side when they first came out, said we're
5 going to have a dual carbon monoxide and ionization detector for
6 smoke or whatever. Those didn't seem to work. They're better
7 standalone. But I have not seen any in residential areas that
8 were a fixed methane detector. I know they're out there. I don't
9 even have them in my house but **never seen them in place.**

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. So --

12 Q. Thank you.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No questions.

14 MR. MURDOCK: I have one.

15 MR. PADGETT: Okay. Yes, sir.

16 MR. MURDOCK: Phillip Murdock, Atmos Energy.

17 BY MR. MURDOCK:

18 Q. You mentioned communications, communications, communications.
19 And we heard Captain Baker talk about he wished that hazmat would
20 be called on more gas calls. And he went so far as to say that he
21 would like to see Atmos either text or email hazmat when they were
22 rolling on a gas call. And you mentioned that as well, you wished
23 hazmat rolled on more gas calls. What's your opinion around at
24 what point does communication become so burdensome that it becomes
25 noise?

1 A. Yeah, I think that's a very, very good point. Because as I
2 can imagine how many lines that you all go on because I know how
3 many we go on. There's many that we probably do not know about.
4 I think that's the problem is it's noise. And I can use an
5 example to kind of answer your question.

6 Storm water management herein in Dallas, we have a zero
7 hydrocarbon tolerance. So we have car wrecks, whatever, if we
8 have over 2 gallons that hits the ground, we make notification
9 stormwater, wherever it is, where they can make the proper
10 switches, if you will, to cut off inflows and things.

11 And then we had fires. We use a product -- used to use a
12 product AFFF, which is found to have carcinogens in it. But the
13 storm water management wanted to be notified on every time we had
14 a fire where we utilized foam. We said, okay. I told the lady,
15 you're just going to want our two alarm fires. You're not going
16 to want all of them. Well, after a week and she had a little over
17 12,000 calls she said calf-rope. it's like you said noise. I
18 don't want those. So, yes, sir, I think it's noise.

19 I think the key of communication here, maybe not so much
20 Atmos notifying us, hey, we're going on here and here and here,
21 because it will become noise, but it's the fire crews, which are
22 responsible for that, giving a heads up when it's something more
23 than just I backed over a gas line, and we're here to stand by a
24 meter. So there's got to be a sweet spot there where we don't
25 wait until the world is coming to an end, and we don't go out on

1 every time somebody smells -- somebody pass gas from a cow or
2 whatever it is. So I agree with that 100 percent. You can be
3 overwhelmed with anything. And in this case, yes, the fatigue and
4 the noise would end up creating, I think, more problems than the
5 information that potentially could be gleaned from that.

6 MR. MURDOCK: Thank you.

7 MR. PADGETT: That's it?

8 DR. JENNER: Just about. You -- we're very close. I just
9 want to make the observation about 5 minutes ago you said danger
10 Will Robinson. And I just want to make the observation there are
11 only three people in this room old enough to get that reference.

12 MR. PADGETT: Oh, yeah. Lost in Space.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Lost in Space.

14 DR. JENNER: The original Lost in Space. Okay. The
15 original.

16 MR. PADGETT: I'm sorry. I should have clarified.

17 DR. JENNER: No, that's fine. We can clear that --

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You want that on the transcript?

19 DR. JENNER: Yes, I do. Because we may be looking, who is
20 this Will Robinson guy?

21 MR. PADGETT: That's true. That would be hard to explain.

22 BY DR. JENNER:

23 Q. Next to that, my last question though I'm going to ask --

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. -- if there's any thoughts you have that can help us with the

1 investigation that we haven't already discussed either between you
2 or anyone else we talked to the last couple of days?

3 A. Off the top of my head, again, I'm not privy to that. I know
4 we'll see things after it, but I'm curious to hear kind of from
5 the Atmos side operational folks, kind of if there's this -- we
6 have blinders on because of our jobs. We're doing our job.
7 They're doing their job. And apparently we weren't looking at
8 this, that and the other. Be interesting to see where those two
9 pieces tie up.

10 In your investigation, I think, we've heard common
11 denominators and things that, as I alluded to earlier, the Swiss
12 cheese where it's finally just lined up where all the holes came
13 out with a bad outcome. I heard one of our investigators say this
14 is not a common type of call. I would disagree with that, as we
15 have especially in an aging infrastructure anywhere, but here in
16 Dallas with the movement, as I alluded to, I think that is
17 something that needs to be focused on by you all.

18 So you're kind of asking me the weather dynamics, the fact of
19 the hot, cold, lots of rain. Just, I mean, as I call it in
20 Tennessee a septic tank overflow rain. Literally we've had the
21 fire station closed because of some of the other collapses of
22 sewer lines and all here in Dallas. So this area is not immune to
23 having movement. We're right on the edge of the Barnett Shale
24 right here at the Dallas County Line to Tarrant County. There's a
25 lot of movement. And I'm not an engineer on that aspect, but

1 we've had, ever since the fracking and stuff started we've had
2 earthquakes, all kind of things. So there is movement. We talked
3 about the clay soils. I think that has a bearing on everything
4 involved.

5 So that's the only kind of bit I can throw out there that
6 maybe we haven't chased down. I don't know if that's a factor,
7 but it's just something that's kind of in the back of my head.

8 DR. JENNER: Terrific. Okay. Looking around the room there
9 are no additional questions. So I want to thank you very much for
10 your --

11 MR. PADGETT: You're very welcome. Entertainment --

12 DR. JENNER: -- all your --

13 MR. PADGETT: -- for the last --

14 DR. JENNER: Terrific. It is 3:35, and we're done with this.

15 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

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 Ted Padgett

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.



Katherine Motley
Transcriber