

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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

* Accident No.: PLD18FR002

* * * * *

Interview of: RENE MOLINA

Walnut Hill Recreation Center
Dallas, Texas

Tuesday,
February 27, 2018

APPEARANCES:

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

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

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

PHILLIP MURDOCK, Director of Engineering and Compliance
Atmos Energy

JOSE CHEVEREZ, Pipeline Inspector
Railroad Commission of Texas

JIM COLLINS, Regional Manager
Railroad Commission of Texas

TED PADGETT, Chief of Staff
Dallas Fire and Rescue

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:36 a.m.)

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3 MS. GUNARATNAM: Good morning. My name is Rachael Gunaratnam
4 and I'm an investigator with the National Transportation Safety
5 Board. Today is February 27th, 2018, and the time is 9:36 a.m.
6 We are currently at the Walnut Hill Rec Center in Dallas, Texas.
7 We are here to investigate the house explosion at Espanola Drive
8 in Dallas on Friday, February 23rd, 2018.

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

12 My name is Rachael Gunaratnam, R-A-C-H-A-E-L, G-U-N-A-R-A-T-
13 N-A-M, and I'm a hazmat investigator with the NTSB.

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

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

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

20 MR. PADGETT: Ted Padgett, Chief of Staff, Dallas Fire-
21 Rescue, Papa-Alpha-Delta-Golf-Echo-Tango-Tango.

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

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

1 MR. MOLINA: Senior Fire Prevention Officer Rene Molina,
2 R-E-N-E, M-O-L-I-N-A. My position is arson investigator with
3 Dallas Fire-Rescue.

4 INTERVIEW OF RENE MOLINA

5 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

6 Q. Great. So, just starting off, can you give us a background
7 into your career with the Dallas Fire Service?

8 A. I have been with the Dallas Fire Service since 2003. I've
9 been with the City of Dallas as a police officer since 1998.

10 Q. And can you expand on your education, training?

11 A. My education, I have a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice
12 Protective Services. I'm also a federal agent with the U.S. Army
13 as a CID agent. And that's the -- my focus is in investigations.

14 Q. And how long have you been in your current position?

15 A. My current position, I've been in since 2007.

16 Q. Okay. So can you tell us how you were -- what your role was
17 in the Friday, February 23rd incident?

18 A. My role was to interview the family members at the hospital.
19 Myself and Lieutenant Price went to Children's, initially, and
20 Lieutenant Price interviewed the medical staff there at the
21 Children's Medical Center, and, myself, when we went over to
22 Parkland, I interviewed the Spanish-speaking mother, the
23 grandmother, and the husband of the family.

24 Q. And you arrived there around what time?

25 A. We arrived at the hospital around -- now that, I'm going to

1 have to give an approximate time. I would say approximately 8:15,
2 8:30-ish, around there.

3 Q. Okay. Could you explain what the conversation that you had?

4 A. The initial conversation I had with Maria Rogers was -- I
5 asked, were -- what her activities were prior to the explosion.
6 She said herself and the rest of the family was asleep. Herself
7 and her husband were asleep in their bedroom. She was awakened by
8 debris, insulation upon her. She did go further to explain that
9 her son was the one that helped her out of her position. And as
10 soon as they were -- she was freed-up, that then she saw her
11 husband.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Throughout that conversation, she did have concerns of her
14 daughter. And because I think from there she -- they said once
15 she was freed up, they went to look for her mother and -- which
16 her name is Umbado-Camacho, and from there they located her
17 daughter, Linda Michelle Rogers, who was unconscious. And I
18 completed my interview with Ms. Rogers and went and spoke with the
19 husband, Jose Fiscal, afterwards.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. En route to speak with Mr. Fiscal, I did meet with Lieutenant
22 Price, who had just completed speaking with the son, Donny Rogers,
23 who she provided me a sketch that he had given her.

24 So with that sketch, I did go in and speak with Mr. Fiscal,
25 and he also further explained that his position in the house was

1 also in the bedroom at the time of the explosion. He was asleep.
2 He did hear the explosion, and again, debris, ceiling debris and
3 insulation fell upon him but he was able to free himself.

4 I further asked if prior, earlier in that evening to that
5 explosion, had there been any odors, smells, any headaches,
6 anything of a physical nature that would have implied that there
7 was a gas or vapor having an impact on their physical state. He
8 said no, that they only smelled the burn odor, both inside and
9 outside the house, and they believed it came from the house that
10 had burned earlier in the week.

11 He did confirm that the house HVAC system is gas powered, and
12 that the water heater also is gas powered. I further confirmed
13 that the sketch that Donny provided was accurate into the layout
14 of the house.

15 From here, I did get back and speak with Lieutenant Price
16 over what was discussed. I did go and speak from there with
17 Ms. Umbado-Camacho, the mother of Maria Rogers. Her area that --
18 in which she was sleeping, was the living room area by the front
19 wall. She said again she was awakened by debris falling upon her.
20 I asked her about the night before's activities. She said that
21 they had gone to sleep late in preparation for the little girl's
22 cheerleading competition. And that they did -- again I asked her,
23 did she smell anything out of the ordinary. They said no. They
24 did use the stove for cooking dinner earlier that evening.

25 One thing she did say that was different from Maria Rogers

1 and Mr. Fiscal, that I went back and later confirmed with them, is
2 she said they heard a loud popping noise that sounded like a pan
3 falling or somebody slamming their hand against a glass. She said
4 it was around 11 p.m. So that did kind of stand out. She did
5 further state that they searched and didn't find or see anything
6 out of the norm.

7 So, from there, I did go back to Ms. Rogers to confirm that
8 additional statement of Ms. Camacho about the loud noise. And she
9 did confirm that, around that same time, they heard a noise of a
10 popping sound. And they did investigate and didn't find anything.
11 From there, I did go back to Mr. Fiscal and asked him the same
12 regarding the -- if they heard anything that evening. He did
13 confirm that they did hear a noise, as he described, a pan
14 falling, in the kitchen area of the house, which is the center,
15 central area. Again, he did state that they searched and didn't
16 see anything out of place.

17 As I exited Mr. Fiscal room, I ran into Donny Rogers, who was
18 in the hallway because they were guiding him to his mother's room.
19 I asked him the same question, and he further confirmed that same
20 unknown noise occurred. And he's the one that stated that it
21 sounded like somebody had slapped their hand up against glass, and
22 that's how he described it.

23 And that was pretty much the information gathered from
24 speaking with Ms. Rogers -- Maria Rogers, that is; Donny Rogers,
25 in passing; Jose Fiscal; and the mother of Ms. Rogers, Umbado-

1 Camacho.

2 Q. Okay. So after you had -- that was the end?

3 A. Yes. Yes, that was the end then.

4 Q. Okay, and then what did you do after?

5 A. Met up with Ms. Price. We -- Lieutenant Price, we discussed
6 what had -- we -- what I had found out, and compared to the --
7 confirming the layout of the house, that Jose Fiscal was able to
8 confirm the drawing of Donny. Advised her of the information
9 regarding the popping noise in the house; locations of the people,
10 parents in the front bedroom, Donny in the rear bedroom. It was
11 only a two-bedroom house.

12 Oh, yes, it does remind me, furthermore. Ms. Maria Rogers
13 did add in the initial conversation that they had just moved in a
14 month ago and it was a newly remodeled house. She said fully,
15 fully remodeled from the floors to ceiling, and that the sleeping
16 areas -- the mother, while she was visiting, was sleeping in the,
17 again, the front living room area near the front door, and the
18 daughter, Linda Michelle Rogers, was sleeping in the living room.

19 Now, she said near an inner wall. Looking at the sketch,
20 Donny has his sister more sleeping towards the middle wall, outer-
21 middle, middle outer wall. And that Donny was sleeping in the
22 back bedroom. And those were the sleeping arrangements. And
23 again, purchased the house about a month ago, moved in; it was
24 newly remodeled.

25 Q. So based off of this sketch, where was the location of the

1 HVAC system and water heater?

2 A. It was centrally located in the house.

3 Q. Okay, centrally. Okay. And the kitchen?

4 A. The kitchen is -- was centrally located. It was the middle
5 of the house. Behind the kitchen stove area is where the HVAC and
6 the gas lines were centrally located in the house. And that's
7 where they -- where everything was fed off from that initial
8 middle area, branched off from there.

9 Q. Did they -- after having moved in, did they ever have to call
10 the gas company ever? Did they ever talk about --

11 A. No. No, I asked if they had any -- during that period that
12 they lived there, if they had any issues with the house, and they
13 said they did not.

14 Q. Okay. Did they provide any names for the construction
15 company or who did the installation of their appliances or
16 anything like that?

17 A. No. The only thing that was near that subject is they had
18 bought the house and they moved in, just a month ago.

19 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. All right. So I'll go ahead and
20 start going around the room.

21 BY DR. JENNER:

22 Q. Steve Jenner, NTSB. Just to clarify, that all the popping
23 noise that you were discussing, that was the previous evening?

24 A. Yes, about 11 p.m. the night before.

25 Q. And they never found the source of that?

1 A. They never found the source. They said they searched, they
2 didn't see anything out of order or out of ordinary of setup of
3 the way the -- their pans and things of that nature, doors. I
4 asked if they did smell anything, and they didn't smell anything.

5 Q. You used the -- you described it as a hand against a glass,
6 as if someone is smashing their hand through a glass?

7 A. Yes. Donny stated that, said like somebody slapped their
8 hand against a, like a glass window or glass door.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. And that's how he described it. Jose Fiscal, he described it
11 as a pan falling and hitting the ground.

12 DR. JENNER: Okay. Very good. Thank you.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No questions.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

15 MS. COLLETTI: None from me.

16 MR. MURDOCK: None from me.

17 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

18 Q. Sorry, just to go back to that pan falling. You said the
19 father heard it in the kitchen area?

20 A. He said it was in the general area of the kitchen.

21 Q. General area. Was he the only one that said that or anyone
22 else?

23 A. He's the one that kind of said that. Donny said he couldn't,
24 he couldn't really pinpoint an area. He said it was to his -- to
25 the left of him, which kind of gives the centralized area, because

1 he said he was back in his room. And the grandmother, the --
2 Maria Rogers's mother, Umbado-Camacho, she was in the living room,
3 but she could not give a direction. She just said she heard it.

4 And so the living room, my understanding -- I have not seen
5 the inside of the house. Just going by the sketch, my
6 understanding is the living room, kitchen, dining room is an open
7 concept layout. So that's where she was at.

8 Q. Apart from the daughter, do you know if the family, any of
9 the family members were admitted into the hospital?

10 A. They were all -- well, initially, they were admitted. The --
11 when I saw the mother and the grandmother, they both had the neck
12 braces on. So did Mr. Jose Fiscal, had a neck brace, facial
13 lacerations. The mother, Maria Rogers, had some facial impacts
14 and cuts. The grandmother, some scratches on her face, but I
15 understand she had a foot injury. I couldn't tell because of
16 blankets on her. Donny was up and walking around. He didn't
17 hardly have any -- just maybe some minor cuts and bruises, but no
18 great physical impact.

19 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. I'll just go back once around.

20 Got anything? Jim?

21 MR. COLLINS: No questions.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

23 MS. GUNARATNAM: All right. Thank you so much.

24 MR. MOLINA: All right. You're welcome. Thank you.

25 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


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RESIDENCE, DALLAS, TEXAS
FEBRUARY 27, 2018
Interview of Rene Molina

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.



Deborah D. Sweigart
Transcriber