



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Name: Ricky Rodriguez

Department Atmos Energy / Mid-Tex Operations

Title: Crew Leader

Date of Interview: March 8, 2018

I have reviewed my transcript(s) from the above referenced accident and:

I have no comments to make.

My comments are submitted herewith.

My comments are marked on the attached copy.



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of: *

*

NATURAL GAS-FUELED EXPLOSION OF *

RESIDENCE, DALLAS, TEXAS * Accident No.: PLD18FR002

FEBRUARY 23, 2018 *

*

* * * * *

Interview of: RICKY RODRIGUEZ

Hampton Inn and Suites
Dallas, Texas

Thursday,
March 8, 2018

APPEARANCES:

ROGER EVANS, Investigator-in-Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

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

MICHAEL JONES, Accident Investigator
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration

JIM COLLINS, Regional Manager
Railroad Commission of Texas

JOHN McDILL, Vice President of Pipeline Safety
Atmos Energy

THOMAS TOBIN, Attorney
Wilson Elser
(On behalf of Atmos Energy)

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>I N D E X</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Ricky Rodriguez:		
By Mr. Evans		5
By Dr. Jenner		22
By Mr. Collins		24
By Mr. McDill		27
By Mr. Evans		31

I N T E R V I E W

(3:30 p.m.)

1
2
3 MR. EVANS: Good afternoon. Today is March 8, 2018. It is
4 now 2:30 p.m., and that's Central Time. My name is Roger Evans.
5 I'm the investigator-in-charge with the National Transportation
6 Safety Board out of Washington, DC.

7 We're at the Hampton Inn in Dallas, Texas, and this interview
8 is being conducted as part of the investigation into the Espanola
9 Drive -- E-S-P-A-N-O-L-A Drive -- accident that occurred in
10 Dallas, Texas on the 23rd of February at about 6:45 p.m.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: A.M.

12 DR. JENNER: A.M.

13 MR. EVANS: A.M. Excuse me. A.M. In the morning. Okay,
14 this case number is -- for this NTSB is PLD18FR002. This
15 interview is being recorded and may be transcribed at a later
16 date. A copy of the transcript will be provided to the
17 interviewee for review prior to being entered into the public
18 docket.

19 Mr. Rodriguez, you're permitted to have a person here with
20 you to represent you, and today you have --

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thomas W. Tobin.

22 MR. EVANS: Yeah. And can you please introduce yourself?

23 MR. TOBIN: My name is Tom Tobin. I'm an attorney with the
24 Wilson Elser firm, [REDACTED]

25 [REDACTED].

1 MR. EVANS: Okay. And no telephone numbers when we ask the
2 information, by the way.

3 Okay, now I'd like to go around the room and have each person
4 introduce themselves with your job title, your organization and
5 who you're representing. And we'll start to my left.

6 MR. McDILL: John McDill, M-C-D-I-L-L. Vice president of
7 pipeline safety for Atmos Energy. Business address is [REDACTED]

8 [REDACTED].

9 MR. COLLINS: Jim Collins, J-I-M, C-O-L-L-I-N-S. Regional
10 manager for the Railroad Commission of Texas. [REDACTED]

11 [REDACTED].

12 MR. JONES: Michael Jones. That's M-I-C-H-A-E-L, J-O-N-E-S.
13 Accident investigator with the PHMSA accident investigation
14 division located at [REDACTED],

15 [REDACTED].

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

18 MR. EVANS: Okay. Thanks for coming today, Ricky. We really
19 appreciate it. And we can call you Ricky; that's your --

20 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yes, call me Ricky.

21 MR. EVANS: Okay. Great.

22 INTERVIEW OF RICKY RODRIGUEZ

23 BY MR. EVANS:

24 Q. Before we begin, if you can give us your job title, how long
25 you've been with the company, where you -- how long -- you know,

1 where you worked before. And if you've been here a number of
2 years, kind of, your job progression, your different titles you've
3 had along the way.

4 A. My name is Ricky Rodriguez.

5 Q. Spelling, please.

6 A. R-I-C-K-Y, R-O-D-R-I-G-U-E-Z. I'm a crew leader out of

7 Dallas service center, [REDACTED].

8 Like I said, I was a crew lead. I've been with the company 13
9 years. I started, I started out in construction, worked my way up
10 to a senior, and then I worked my way up to crew lead, which --
11 I'm a crew lead today. I've been a crew lead for -- since 2012.
12 I believe it's March or April of 2012. And been a crew lead since
13 then.

14 Q. And you joined the company what year?

15 A. June 2005.

16 Q. And prior to the June 2005?

17 A. I worked at Tyson's chicken plant. And that's my only job I
18 ever had. That was out of high school.

19 Q. Okay. And education level?

20 A. Just high school. Yeah, no college.

21 Q. And your, and your role you have now, you have people report
22 to you, correct?

23 A. I have two guys who work under me.

24 Q. Okay. And who are they?

25 A. Avi Macias and Daniel Garcia.

1 Q. And how do you -- and can you please spell names as you say
2 them in a -- and if you, and if you know?

3 A. Avi, I spell his name as A-V-I.

4 Q. A-V-I.

5 A. And Macias, M-A -- well his actually name is -- well how you
6 spell his actual real name is Avimael. That's why I call him Avi.
7 But it's A-V-I-M-A-E-L. His last name is Macias, M-A-C-I-A-S.
8 And Daniel Garcia. D-A-N-I-E-L, G-A-R-C-I-A.

9 Q. What are their titles?

10 A. Avi is a senior construction operator, and Daniel's a
11 construction 2 operator.

12 Q. Okay, and are these, like, track hoe, backhoe, backdrop --

13 A. No, just -- that's just a title. They don't -- they're not
14 assigned.

15 Q. They don't, they don't do any sort of work on those types of
16 --

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. -- that type --

19 A. Well we work on everything, so I mean, they're not
20 particularly assigned to work on the backhoe. They could --
21 either one of them could jump on the backhoe or jump in the hole.
22 Yeah.

23 Q. Okay, so they know how to use the --

24 A. Yeah, they know how to use everything.

25 Q. Okay. And with your job, just explain to us a typical scope

1 that you would do in your work.

2 A. We fix gas leaks. And I'm in charge and I plan everything
3 out.

4 Q. Okay, so take us through from the moment that you are made
5 aware of a gas leak, how that happens and, you know, where the
6 information comes from. And then go through the whole process.

7 A. Okay, that depends. Like, me picking out a gas leak or
8 somebody assigning me a gas leak?

9 Q. Well if you get a, if you get an odor complaint kind of call
10 that -- and now you're going to take that. Let's use that one as
11 an example.

12 A. Odor complaint?

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. Like odor in the air?

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. Okay, well, if it's odor in the air, that's an abnormal
17 condition. That would make it a grade 1. So I would respond to
18 it as going to it. First get the address. Usually dispatch, they
19 give us the grade 1s. And I would respond to it, and I -- when I
20 get there, I will assess the situation to see what we need, like,
21 protection-wise. Usually when I respond to a grade 1, I always
22 think of protection of ourselves, then the people where we're at,
23 and then property. So when I get there, I'll assess the
24 situation, figure out what kind of traffic control we need and
25 then go from there.

1 Q. And how would you find out about this?

2 A. When I get onsite.

3 Q. No, I meant, I meant how would you find out about the fact
4 that you have an abnormal odor call? You know, is it going to be
5 a grade 2? What is your -- what's the -- they call you on the
6 phone? Do you have something in your truck?

7 A. They call me on my phone.

8 Q. They do call you on the phone.

9 A. They call on me on my --

10 Q. And is that from a dispatch center?

11 A. That's from our dispatch from the shop.

12 Q. Okay. And if they make that call to you, are you able to
13 check this neighborhood out on a screen in your truck?

14 A. When I get there, yeah.

15 Q. And what does --

16 A. So whenever I get there, I verify where I'm at and then I
17 pull up the maps.

18 Q. Okay. And the maps, what kind of details on those maps?

19 A. That depends on where we're at. Like they're --

20 Q. But does it look similar to this drawing that's in front of
21 you?

22 A. If we're looking on this, I could see the -- what I'm looking
23 for is the main -- well exactly where I'm working at; the services
24 next to it, see what services; what size main it is; if it's
25 steel, cast iron or poly. I'm looking at all the details of it.

1 So about where we're working at.

2 Q. And do you get any visibility as to previous leaks that you
3 may have in the area on that map?

4 A. Not on the map. No.

5 Q. Is there any indication from the dispatch when you get one of
6 these that they would tell you that we've had three leaks in the
7 last two weeks in this one or --

8 A. No, we wouldn't get that information.

9 Q. Okay, so when you go to the leak and you're going to see
10 where it's coming from and all that, tell us how you go about
11 that. In the bar holing and the metering and -- describe that for
12 us.

13 A. Like from beginning to -- like, what are you asking?

14 Q. From when you show up on a scene, like the night you showed
15 up on a scene like this, right?

16 A. Okay.

17 Q. You have two guys with you and yourself, and you start
18 working that scene, correct?

19 A. That leak.

20 Q. Just go from the very moment you get out of the truck and
21 tell us what's going to happen with you and your two guys there
22 with you.

23 A. Okay, so usually on a gas leak, like, that depends on what
24 type of gas leak it is. But usually I'm always the first one to
25 get there. So whenever I get there, I see about where the tech is

1 at. Usually the tech is onsite -- well he's the one that calls it
2 in. So when I get there, I usually park behind him or next to
3 him. And then I'll put out my cones and I'll put my proper PPE
4 on. And then immediately I look to where the hazard's at, or I'll
5 ask him where is it at. And he'll say wherever it's at. That
6 way, when the rig gets there, I could figure out where they're
7 going to park at.

8 And after that, we set up traffic -- or cone -- we cone it
9 off. And then I'll talk to the tech and usually figure out what
10 -- if it's a hit or if it's a leak. Like I said, that just
11 depends on the leak itself. And then we'll go from there. Call
12 Locates in, get the job prepared so we can start doing the job.

13 Q. So at the time when you first go there and you have no idea
14 where it's coming from, what is the investigative technique you
15 use to find the source?

16 A. We use a CGI.

17 Q. And that's exclusively, usually? That CGI is what you
18 normally would use --

19 A. That's what we normally use.

20 Q. -- in every case? Okay. And when do you decide to do bar
21 holing?

22 A. You have to do bar holing every gas leak. So you have to
23 zero it out. Like I said, that just depends on what you get.
24 Like, if you get a hit main or a leak. So that just depends.

25 Q. So just let me repeat this and make sure I get it right for

1 the record. So you get a dispatch. So you go to the scene. Your
2 two guys are going to come up -- come back -- come up. They're
3 going to show up later because you're in separate vehicles, right?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. They have a rig. You have a truck.

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Right? Okay, then are you the person that's going to go out
8 and do the CGI, or one of your, one of your techs?

9 A. It just depends. Like, if we get there on -- like, sometimes
10 I do it; sometimes my guys do it. Or sometimes I'm barring.

11 Like, say we all, we all take turns.

12 Q. Okay, and is there a number that you say, hey, I've got to go
13 and evacuate people?

14 A. Not really, no. Not a particular number. If it seems like a
15 hazard, then I will evacuate it.

16 Q. Okay. But what do you base that, what do you base the
17 evacuation? What criteria would you use to base an evacuation on?

18 A. Like, if I'm smelling gas in the house or under the house,
19 yeah, I'll evacuate a house. Or if we're picking up gas on the
20 street, then -- you know, that just depends. Depends on the
21 situation, on how much gas there is. Or if there's gas blowing
22 directly in it or if it's a cut line or if it's a leak that's
23 traveling. I mean, all that just depends on the situation.

24 Q. Is there a time when you will do a bar hole test and then --
25 and you get a high reading that the reading would be such that you

1 would, you would talk to neighbors and say, it's time to leave?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. What kind of numbers are those?

4 A. Those are, like, 100% numbers.

5 Q. Oh. Those kind of numbers.

6 A. Yeah. Yeah.

7 Q. So when you're getting 100%, then you're going to go and do
8 an evacuation, get the person out of the house.

9 A. No, that depends too, like I said. I mean, I've evacuated
10 people out on 2% getting gas inside their sewer. I've evacuated
11 people on 1%. Like I said, I can't give you a number because
12 every situation is different.

13 Q. Okay. So do you always check the sewer in every case?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay, you put a lead in the --

16 A. I put --

17 Q. -- sewer.

18 A. Sewer. We check underneath the house. We check around the
19 house. We bar the service setup.

20 Q. Okay. And then as you go about your task, are you reporting
21 back to your -- to someone at the same -- you know, during this
22 process?

23 A. If I -- that depends too. If I -- that depends on the
24 situation, again. The reason why I say it depends is because we
25 come across a lot, like --

1 Q. Yeah.

2 A. So I would, I would report to my supervisor if I evacuate a
3 house. If there's fire, you know, something really major, then I
4 would call my supervisor if it's a decision that I can't make or I
5 don't understand.

6 Q. Okay. Now let's go through the day of the event. When you
7 arrived on scene?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. And --

10 MR. TOBIN: Which one? Give a date.

11 MR. EVANS: Pardon me?

12 MR. TOBIN: Give a date.

13 MR. EVANS: Okay, we'll go with the first, the first one. On
14 the 21st?

15 MR. TOBIN: You could ask if he was involved.

16 MR. EVANS: Pardon?

17 MR. TOBIN: If he was involved. You could ask him, of
18 course.

19 BY MR. EVANS:

20 Q. Were you involved with the, with the event on the 21st?

21 A. No.

22 Q. On the 22nd?

23 A. On the 22nd.

24 Q. Okay, let's start from that, then.

25 A. That would be --

1 Q. Recap your day. Everything you can remember.

2 A. From the beginning? From the morning?

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. I walked into work, and we started doing paperwork and
5 computer work and, you know, stuff for our trucks. And we took a
6 lunch. We were planning on coming back to the shop to continue
7 that. As we took a lunch, somewhere between 11:00 and 12:00, I
8 got a call from dispatch that said that we had an emergency, which
9 was a fire. Oh, okay. She gave me the address. They gave me the
10 address, and I responded to it.

11 And I showed up. And when I got there, it wasn't no house on
12 fire. Everything had just -- there was, there was no fire
13 department, nothing. I was like -- kind of weird. I was like, so
14 when did this actually happen? Now I don't know. So I
15 immediately get out, put my cones out. I see a tech. Then he
16 sent us right there, but we're parked on the side. And I said,
17 all right. Well I put my cones out and I started -- I put my ~~PPA~~ ^{PPE}
18 on and I started looking around to see where I'm going to park the
19 rig at. So I walk -- well I walk to the end. So I believe it's
20 Larga. This street right there. Larga. And that's when I see
21 all these -- there's no part you could park right here, so I
22 figured I'd park the rig right here on Durango, which was Durango
23 and Larga on the north side of Durango, on the east side of Larga.
24 And that's where I said I was going to park the rig at.

25 And so now that I had that situation under control, where

1 we're going to put our stuff at, I talked to the techs. I seen
2 Salvador -- well as I was walking, I had seen Salvador and Juan,
3 and then I see the techs. And then when I see the techs, they
4 were telling me about this house and the alley and what they were
5 reading. And by then, Sal comes out and he starts talking to the
6 techs, and I'm just waiting to see what my orders are, since Sal
7 assumed command of the situation.

8 Q. So when you went to that -- when you went out on the 22nd,
9 the address that you went to on that night was?

10 A. They gave me the address of 20 -- no, was it -- 3515 Durango.
11 That was a fire, I believe. And when I got there, my task ended
12 up turning out to be 3519 Durango, which was a service that -- I
13 had it replaced that night, or that evening.

14 Q. So you went to 3515, but then you ended up doing 3519. You
15 did -- you replaced the service.

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Yeah, in case I didn't get this, earlier you said when you
18 went to the scene, was the home on fire at the time you arrived?

19 A. No. Actually the home was --

20 Q. Nothing there.

21 A. There was nothing -- I mean, it was -- it caught on fire. I
22 don't know what time it did or nothing. But there was no fire
23 department onsite. There was nobody onsite.

24 Q. And the fire had been --

25 A. The fire had been put out. You could just smell it, you

1 know? There was no smoke in the air. Nothing.

2 Q. Okay. And did you smell gas when you, when you walked up to
3 that --

4 A. No.

5 Q. Okay. And what did, what did your guys do to -- did you do
6 anything with 3515 Durango as far as any testing or anything like
7 that?

8 A. No.

9 Q. And 3519, you must have done testing to figure out that it
10 was bad, so -- because you had to replace it, right?

11 A. When I got there, the service techs had already barred
12 everything -- mostly everything -- out. So I don't know how long
13 they were there. I don't know. So when I got there, they already
14 had the leaks -- where the leaks were at and what they were
15 picking up. And I really was given the task to replace it or dig
16 it up, because they were picking up a percentage right there at
17 3519. So that was my task that I was given, and that's how we
18 came about digging that up.

19 Q. And how long did it take you from the time that you got there
20 until the time the service was replaced?

21 A. After I got there?

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. Most of the night. We didn't get done till about 10:30.

24 Q. Now how do you accommodate the 811 dig permit and all that
25 stuff? You know, your call before you dig routine? 811?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. How do you accommodate that in the middle of the night like
3 that?

4 A. Well now that I knew the task that I was given, I immediately
5 called Locates. And as soon as I called Locates, I called Locates
6 for another leak. And after I called Locates for that, then I got
7 traffic control out there. So after I called Locates, since
8 that's the first thing -- you have to wait minimum two hours.
9 After that, that's when I was getting everything prepared of what
10 we were going to do, even preparing the leak that was right there
11 next to us across the street. So I was pretty much making sure
12 everything was safe.

13 Q. And the service pipe that you, that you took out or that you
14 replaced, what was the existing material in that?

15 A. It was a poly riser. It had a piece of poly service.
16 Because it was probably, like, a six-foot service, maybe five-
17 foot. It was a short-side service. So it was a poly riser, poly
18 service that transitioned into steel.

19 Q. And the leak, could you tell where the leak was coming from?

20 A. Yes. We soaked it out. The leak was on the dresser and
21 ~~fading~~ fitting on the main, which would be, like, the collar.

22 Q. So a fitting on the main, and what else did you say?

23 A. A dresser.

24 Q. Oh, the dresser. Okay.

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Dresser fitting. Okay. Okay, so -- and you still didn't
2 smell gas?

3 A. Could smell a little bit after we dug it up, but -- yeah,
4 those were fizzes.

5 Q. Do you have an understanding of the Mercaptan addition to
6 natural gas to make it have an odor to it?

7 A. No.

8 Q. No? Have you been told that gas odor can fade out of --

9 A. Yeah. Well I -- what I have known of gas odor is that we put
10 chemicals in our -- in natural gas. How much? I don't know. Or
11 how long it takes before it fades, I don't know.

12 Q. But are you, are you familiar with the fact that gas may not
13 always have an odor?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay. I was just curious about that. And then after the
16 service replacement at 3519, what happened next?

17 A. Well after we were done, I talked to Sal, and he wanted me to
18 dig up another service. And I can't remember which one it was,
19 but I dug up the wrong service, so I stopped. They stopped me.

20 Q. But it was near this same location?

21 A. It was down the street. I don't even know --

22 Q. So you just excavated and then you filled it back in again
23 right after that?

24 A. Yes, the way Sal told me -- it was probably miscommunication.
25 Because he told me to dig up the right side of -- there was -- I

1 guess there was another fire. I don't know. Or something. I
2 don't know. There was a fire. I don't know, I don't know what it
3 was, but he wanted me to dig up the service next to it. So I
4 started digging that up, but I dug up the wrong one. What really
5 he -- if he -- I was looking at the riser from the alley point.
6 So I dug up the right side, and what he meant was looking at it in
7 front of the address to dig up the right side.

8 Q. Which is a logical mistake.

9 A. So whenever he was the -- whenever I was digging there, he
10 really meant digging here. And the techs stopped me. They were
11 like, hey, what are you doing? I'm like, I'm digging up the
12 service that he wanted me to dig up. And they said it was the
13 wrong one. So I hit the sewer line, that line on that one, so I
14 couldn't backfill it. But I didn't get too far. I only got maybe
15 about a foot and a half deep, if that.

16 Q. So did you have a dig permit for that one, though? An 811
17 call? Locate?

18 A. I believe so. When I called it in, I called it in from that
19 address all the way --

20 Q. All the way back.

21 A. -- to that whole block. So I had -- we had everything -- I
22 got everything ready for that. So I had -- I can't even think of
23 which one it is.

24 Q. Okay.

25 MR. TOBIN: Do you have a (indiscernible)? Do you want to

1 get him to mark it, Roger, or --

2 MR. EVANS: No, I've got the map, if that's all right.

3 BY MR. EVANS:

4 Q. So as far as this neighborhood goes, okay? I mean, it's an
5 older neighborhood, obviously.

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. It's been around since after World War II. Had you made
8 quite a few trips out in this neighborhood in your career at the
9 -- at Atmos?

10 A. I remember one. Yeah, I worked on this neighborhood. I
11 can't tell you where, but I remember one.

12 Q. But do you recall what you did at that time?

13 A. Replaced a service. I replaced a service.

14 Q. Okay. Just in your work, do you have any neighborhoods where
15 you say, oh, not that again; I got to go out there again? Are
16 there problem neighborhoods that have been prone to service line
17 replacements or odor calls, or are there certain neighborhoods
18 that tend to be -- I mean, you've been so many times that you say,
19 oh, I know where that is; I don't even need to look at a map.
20 I've been there before.

21 A. No, I mean, I've been in -- I guess I've been in here for so
22 long that I've worked in quite a few neighborhoods, so I couldn't
23 --

24 Q. But none come to mind that --

25 A. None that's coming to mind right now.

1 Q. Okay. Okay.

2 MR. EVANS: That's all I have for right now.

3 DR. JENNER: This is Steve Jenner. Just a couple questions.

4 BY DR. JENNER:

5 Q. Were you aware of other work that was being done? Other
6 construction type work?

7 A. During that night?

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. After I got there, a lot of people got there, so yeah. I was
10 aware that there was people working next to me, down the street.
11 They were all around us.

12 Q. Okay. Did you talk to any those crews?

13 A. No, I did not talk to the crew. The only person I really
14 talked to was just the crew that was working next to us on Larga.
15 I can't even think of the address. That's it. And Sal. The
16 supervisors. You know, inform them of what we have, what we're
17 doing, you know, and stuff like that.

18 Q. All right. How did the -- or did it, the weather affect your
19 operations?

20 A. It affected us pretty -- it took us -- we had to work slower
21 because it was, it was muddy. When I dug it up, it was raining.
22 And we pretty much had to work slower pace, safer pace.

23 Q. Okay. So what time did you -- were you working on your site
24 from beginning to end?

25 A. From our site? I want to say between 12:00 and 1:00 is when

1 I called Locates. I dug it up around 3:45, around that time.

2 It's 3:40 to 3:45 is when I started digging it up.

3 Q. And how long were you working on it?

4 A. From there? 3:45 to -- like I said, we got down there at
5 around 10:30.

6 Q. Okay. And what did you do after that?

7 A. Dig up that next service, the one that I said I dug up the
8 wrong one.

9 Q. Yeah, okay. So from the start -- what time did you start on
10 that project, the second one?

11 A. The second one? I want to say it was around 11:00. I can't
12 give you the exact time. I could only give you approximate.

13 Q. Sure. "Around" is fine. That's okay.

14 A. Yeah, it's around 11:00.

15 Q. Okay. And how long did you work on that?

16 A. I only got 15 minutes before they stopped me.

17 Q. Okay. And then -- so they stopped you and you go to the
18 correct location, or were you --

19 A. After that, they stopped me and the correct location was
20 behind me. So I mean, I went and looked at it and investigated
21 that, and started looking around. And then that's when we started
22 -- actually we didn't start nothing, because relief came after
23 that.

24 Q. Okay. So your shift ended when?

25 A. It ended roughly 11:30, 12:00.

1 Q. Okay. Okay. What was, what was your take on all the
2 activity that was going on?

3 A. It was a lot of work that was being done that night. My take
4 was just focusing on what we were doing. I mean, we had a, we had
5 a -- it was pretty tough in the rain, so I was more worried about
6 our leak and our task that we were given, so --

7 DR. JENNER: Okay. Great, thank you.

8 MR. JONES: All right. I have no questions at this time.

9 MR. COLLINS: Okay. Jim Collins, Railroad Commission of
10 Texas. Thank you for being here, Ricky. A couple questions.

11 BY MR. COLLINS:

12 Q. First, do you have any other leak detection equipment
13 available to you, other than the CGI, the compressed gas
14 indicator?

15 A. Just the CGI. That's about it.

16 Q. Just the CGI. Okay. Thank you. When you called in your
17 Locates and you have to wait the minimum two hours --

18 A. Correct.

19 Q. This is an emergency Locates, according to 811, and you have
20 to wait a minimum of two hours. In that waiting of two hours, did
21 an individual show up to locate the lines and paint and flag, or
22 you just have to wait two hours and then you locate them?

23 A. We have to wait two hours and then we start digging.

24 Q. Okay. So the lines were not necessarily located.

25 A. The lines were not located.

1 Q. Okay. Okay. But you do, you do utilize your mapping system,
2 I believe, to get an approximate location. And is your mapping
3 system -- is it accurate enough to say, okay, here's the property
4 line; the meter's here, we've got five feet south, east, west of
5 the property line? Or is it your best guess? So the alley was
6 approximately 12 feet wide. How do you know what side of the
7 alley to dig on?

8 A. Like I said, the mapping -- that's whenever I would look at
9 the maps, and it actually has measurements of whereabouts it's at,
10 so --

11 Q. Okay, okay. Thank you for that.

12 A. But we also have a locator too, so --

13 Q. Right. Did you use your locator?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay. And you are -- you used your location equipment.

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Thank you. Okay. Last question, I hope. So while you're
18 excavating to replace a service line or to excavate the leak, you,
19 if I'm not mistaken, have to pretty much continually monitor for a
20 hazardous situation --

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. -- correct? So it's raining. It's wet. The hole's wet. Do
23 you use your CGI to monitor for gas?

24 A. We have several types of what we're going to do when we work
25 and stuff like that. We have sensors on our helmet. So that

1 picks up gas, or if you're not -- you know, air oxygen levels,
2 everything. So that's on our helmet. We also stick our Sensit.
3 That has an O2 sensor and all that on it as well, so that's always
4 by the hole next to it. Inside the hole as well, so --

5 Q. How do you accomplish that when it's raining, it's wet?

6 A. Where we were at, it wasn't -- I mean, it wasn't -- the hole
7 wasn't wet. Like, hole wasn't -- it wasn't --

8 Q. Hole wasn't wet.

9 A. The water wasn't pouring in.

10 Q. It wasn't pouring in. Okay. So you --

11 A. No. That wasn't --

12 Q. You found the dry spot, essentially.

13 A. Yeah. Where we were at, the only time it was actually wet
14 was when I first started digging it up, but it had stopped.

15 Q. Okay. Thank you for that. Does any of your -- you or your
16 crew, do you -- once you repaired the leak and you tested that
17 hole for no more gas, you fill in your hole. Do you then bar hole
18 again --

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. -- around?

21 A. We check the same hole and --

22 Q. Check the same holes --

23 A. -- bar some new holes.

24 Q. -- and bar some new holes around --

25 A. Easier to cover it up, so on that track --

1 Q. Right. Right. Okay. Okay, I was just trying to get the
2 process. I had a picture in my mind of what it was, but hearing it
3 from you definitely clarified some things.

4 MR. COLLINS: That is all the questions I have. Thank you,
5 sir.

6 MR. McDILL: Hey, Ricky. John McDill, Atmos Energy.

7 BY MR. McDILL:

8 Q. Just a few questions kind of going back to the -- process-
9 wise. But you said you were dispatched from the shop. Does that
10 mean you were dispatched from someone at the Dallas service
11 center?

12 A. Yes, it's usually -- dispatch, they have a dispatch phone,
13 emergency phone, strictly, I guess, for dispatching. I know
14 that's who assigns us to grade 1s. Yeah.

15 Q. Okay. And most of the leak investigation were -- as you said
16 on a couple times when you arrived, there were already a service
17 technician or service technicians.

18 A. That's who usually calls the grade 1s in, is a service
19 technician. And from there, once they, once they realize it's an
20 abnormal condition, then they call dispatch, and dispatch usually
21 calls a crew out, which will be us. After hours, if -- well they
22 call us direct. That's whoever's on call.

23 Q. Okay. So normally, you're not the first person there to most
24 of those leak investigations.

25 A. No.

1 Q. Is that correct?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Somebody is there to conduct the initial --

4 A. Somebody is there, and they use their --

5 Q. And then you can come and conduct additional assessments?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Okay. Thank you for clarifying that. You mentioned when
8 trying to repair the 3519 Durango where you had to replace the
9 service line?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. I heard you describe, and that -- I may have done so
12 incorrectly -- that it was a fizz leak?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Can you -- I mean, was it -- can you describe the nature of
15 the leak?

16 A. I could -- like I said, I call it fizz. It's probably
17 another word for it. But a fizz leak to me is when you pour soap
18 on it, and it's not blowing, but it's just throwing up bubbles.
19 Like, small bubbles.

20 Q. Got it.

21 A. To me, that's a -- I call it a fizz leak.

22 Q. So in the course of trying to replace that service line, did
23 you have to weld on a new fitting, or could you utilize existing
24 tap or --

25 A. We killed that whole service out. And the welder welds a new

1 tap.

2 Q. Okay, and that's what you did on --

3 A. That's what we -- yeah, that's what we did.

4 Q. Okay. If I -- I don't know the best way to handle this from
5 a visual standpoint, for the record. I was going to provide you
6 with kind of an excavation or drawing that maybe has addresses
7 that are more legible to me than this map.

8 A. Yes.

9 MR. EVANS: Okay.

10 MR. TOBIN: Just this right here?

11 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, I see that. What do you want?

12 BY MR. McDILL:

13 Q. So just, for the record, on the excavation map, trying to
14 help me visualize better about the locations of the properties.
15 3519 Durango is on that.

16 A. Yeah. This is 3519 right here. It's -- this thing is 176
17 feet from east. It's going east from east property line.

18 Q. Of Larga?

19 A. Of Larga. So it's going -- make sure it's right. A hundred
20 and seventy-six feet east. Also right here, it has -- looks like
21 would be a valve or dresser. And it's saying it's two foot north
22 from south property line, this dresser, which means this is going
23 north from south property line. So it's two foot --

24 Q. North of that.

25 A. North of --

1 Q. In the alley.

2 A. North of that in the alley. So that gave me a location, and
3 when I put our actual locator on there, same thing.

4 Q. And could you point out, maybe, which property you were --
5 maybe incorrectly dug, or if you're -- I don't know if you --

6 A. Oh, I can't. I have to look at that -- I wouldn't, I
7 wouldn't even be able to tell you. I'd have --

8 Q. So if you were, if you were --

9 A. But I know --

10 Q. -- facing that --

11 A. I know it's back this way.

12 Q. Back to the east of there?

13 A. Back to that way.

14 Q. Okay. Okay. That helps clarify that for me. And as, and as
15 part of your training as a crew leader, do you normally have leak
16 investigation training? Right?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Have you had the opportunity to attend some of the training
19 for --

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. At the Charles K. Vaughan Center? For leak investigations?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. That involves hands-on training, classroom training? Can you
24 tell us a little bit about --

25 A. Yes, I go through a lot of training. Pretty much everything

1 we're OQ qualified, we go through a training, so --

2 Q. Okay. Okay.

3 MR. McDILL: I think that's all the questions I had. Thank
4 you for clarifying that.

5 MR. RODRIGUEZ: No problem.

6 BY MR. EVANS:

7 Q. Yeah, when -- earlier you explained that you had -- this is
8 Roger Evans. Earlier you had explained that the -- that you had
9 hit a sewer?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Did you actually crack the sewer?

12 A. When I say sewer, I call it all the same, because it's part
13 of the sewer. What I hit was just the stack that comes
14 aboveground. And it's actually above this (indiscernible), that's
15 what you see when you're walking through the alley. So those
16 little sewer things. And on that particular one, it had a little
17 dirt over it so I didn't see it. So when I cracked it, I pretty
18 much ripped that top part off. So I didn't -- we didn't get deep
19 enough to get to the main.

20 Q. But the sewer was then open to the atmosphere at that point?

21 A. Yes. The sewer -- I believe it's called a sewer cleanout.

22 Q. Sewer cleanout.

23 MR. EVANS: Let me just go off the record for a moment.

24 (Off the record)

25 (On the record)

1 MR. EVANS: Back on the record with Ricky Rodriguez.

2 BY MR. EVANS:

3 Q. We heard earlier that a sewer cleanout had been broken. Can
4 you tell us, on these two drawings you have in front of you, which
5 are the excavation drawings, where this sewer break occurred?

6 A. I don't know the exact address. Couldn't tell you.

7 Q. Is it near the home that exploded, or is it near the two
8 homes that were on fire?

9 A. It was near one of the homes that was on fire. It was
10 actually next door to it.

11 Q. Okay, so I have, I have this drawing that shows -- this is
12 the home where the fatality occurred, and these are the other two
13 homes. So do you know where you may have been?

14 A. Let me see. So if I was facing this way, I dug up the one on
15 the right. If this is correct and that's a home that was on fire,
16 I was on the right side from this alley, which in fact Sal told me
17 to dig up this one.

18 MR. EVANS: Okay, so can we identify what address he's
19 pointing to with these?

20 MR. TOBIN: So it's -- I don't want to guess.

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: That's what I'm saying. I don't want to
22 guess. I don't know the address on it.

23 MR. TOBIN: Here is a house that was on fire. 3527.

24 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Okay. So --

25 MR. McDILL: And 3515.

1 MR. TOBIN: And 3515. These two houses.

2 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So these two were on fire. So the one I dug
3 up would have probably -- if this is it, it would have been this
4 one.

5 MR. TOBIN: 3523.

6 MR. RODRIGUEZ: 3523.

7 BY MR. EVANS:

8 Q. Okay. So to -- the best recollection you have is that the
9 sewer cleanout was in 3523.

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. That -- okay.

12 A. If these are correct. Like I said, I would have to look at
13 it, but --

14 Q. Okay. Yeah, that's fine. Was that ever repaired? Did you
15 --

16 A. Like I said, I got relieved that night, and I was never sent
17 back out there.

18 Q. Okay. And was that broken previous to the explosion that
19 caused the fatality?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Okay. Okay. Let's go back to the training. I would like to
22 hear how -- a little bit about not every single class you've ever
23 had, but the classes you've taken that support what you do now to
24 get your operator qualification. Can you kind of go through how
25 it's done, how often you do it and --

1 A. Like, on which -- just random OQs or you want me to pick one
2 out or --

3 Q. No, the ones, the ones that are related to your current --

4 A. Position?

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. On our F series, we have F1, 2 and 3, 4. Well I call them
7 the F series. They send me which ones we have to do. We get an
8 email on which one, and we could also look it up of which ones we
9 have to do and -- I don't know, it just requires us to let us know
10 which ones we need to do as well.

11 So on our F series, those are stuff that we work on poly. So
12 we have to actually do hands-on and have a guy that would be right
13 there watching us as we do the task, OQ. Get OQ qualified, is
14 what I call it. And we have to do it in front of an evaluator,
15 and he tests it. The instructor tests it. That's one of them.

16 Q. Right. So are most of your OQs -- evaluator approves what
17 he's seeing that you're doing? You normally don't take written
18 tests?

19 A. You have to take a written test.

20 Q. Okay. That's what I was kind of wondering.

21 A. Yeah. Yeah, you have to take a written test on everything.

22 Q. Okay. Yeah. I just wanted to get that for the record.

23 Okay. And your guys that you -- work with you, do you have some
24 sort of a clearing house thing where they can't do tasks
25 underneath you if they don't have, like --

1 A. Yes. If they're, if they're not OQ qualified, they can't
2 work on that particular task. But they could be qualified for
3 something else, and they could do something else.

4 Q. Okay. Yeah.

5 MR. EVANS: Okay, that's all I had.

6 DR. JENNER: Nothing for me.

7 MR. EVANS: Okay.

8 MR. JONES: No more questions for me.

9 MR. EVANS: Okay, well, thank you, Ricky. Appreciate your
10 coming in today and --

11 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Oh, that's it. Yeah.

12 MR. EVANS: That's it. Thank you.

13 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

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 Ricky Rodriguez

ACCIDENT NO.: PLD18FR002

PLACE: Dallas, Texas

DATE: March 8, 2018

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


Eileen Gonzalez
Transcriber