

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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NATURAL GAS-FUELED EXPLOSION *

DURING ROUTINE MAINTENANCE, * Accident No.: PLD21FR002

FARMERSVILLE, TEXAS *

ON JUNE 28, 2021 *

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Interview of: CHRIS FONTANA, Captain
Criminal Investigation Division
Collins County Sheriff's Office

Collins County Sheriff's Office
McKinney, Texas

Wednesday,
June 30, 2021

APPEARANCES:

RACHAEL GUNARATNAM, Hazmat Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

GREG SMITH, Director of System Integrity & Compliance
Atmos Energy

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I N T E R V I E W

(10:10 a.m. CDT)

1
2
3 MS. GUNARATNAM: Good morning. My name is Rachael
4 Gunaratnam. I'm a hazmat investigator with the National
5 Transportation Safety Board out of Washington, D.C.

6 Today is June 30, 2021, and the time is 11:10 a.m. Central
7 Daylight Time. We are currently at the Collin County Sheriff's
8 Office in McKinney, Texas. We are here in response to the natural
9 gas incident that occurred on June 28, 2021 in Farmersville,
10 Texas.

11 Today we are interviewing --

12 CPT FONTANA: Chris Fontana.

13 MS. GUNARATNAM: And you are free to have a representative to
14 consult with during the interview. Is there anyone here that you
15 want?

16 CPT FONTANA: (No audible response.)

17 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Just so you know, the purpose of this
18 investigation is to improve safety, not to assign fault or blame
19 or any liability. Our sole mission is to improve safety and
20 prevent accidents. We can't, however, guarantee any
21 confidentiality or immunity from any legal proceedings by other
22 agencies, whether local, state, or federal. A transcript of this
23 interview will be made public to the public docket. You'll get a
24 chance to review it and make any corrections.

25 So do you have any questions?

1 CPT FONTANA: No.

2 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Also in the room with me is --

3 MR. SMITH: Greg Smith with Atmos Energy.

4 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. And your title?

5 MR. SMITH: Director of system integrity & compliance.

6 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Thank you.

7 MR. SMITH: I think it's 10 o'clock. It is 10:10.

8 MS. GUNARATNAM: Oh, I'm sorry. It is 10:10 a.m.

9 Correction. I'm on D.C. laptop time. Okay. Thank you.

10 INTERVIEW OF CHRIS FONTANA

11 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

12 Q. Okay. So we'll go ahead. And if you could just spell your
13 name real quick and give me your title.

14 A. Chris, C-H-R-I-S, last name is Fontana, F-O-N-T as in Tom-A-
15 N-A. I'm the Captain of the Criminal Investigation Division.

16 Q. Okay. Can you give me just -- tell me a little bit about
17 yourself, your professional background as far as your position.

18 A. I spent 16 years in retail as -- doing district and regional,
19 manager of loss prevention departments. Education: master's
20 degree Arizona State. Been in law enforcement about 13 years.
21 I'm a master peace officer, and I've been with the sheriff's
22 office about 13 years.

23 Q. Okay. And can you tell me what your current role involves?

24 A. My current role is the Captain over the criminal
25 investigations, which consist of over crime scene and property

1 room, narcotics interdiction, Child Crimes Unit, ICAT unit, family
2 violence, any major cases. Pretty much that's it.

3 Q. And how many people are under you or work with you?

4 A. Thirty.

5 Q. Okay. And are they all investigators?

6 A. So you have criminal investigators and you also have
7 civilians in the property room.

8 Q. Okay. How many criminal investigators do you guys have?

9 A. All but two.

10 Q. Oh, okay. So 28?

11 A. Approximately, yeah.

12 Q. And captain -- not captain -- Sgt. Reim, where's -- how does
13 it -- does he work for you?

14 A. So Sgt. Reim is -- so we have -- the chain works, you have
15 your criminal investigators, you got your sergeant, which is Reim,
16 you have lieutenant, which will be Langweiler (ph.) July 6th, then
17 you got your captain, which is me.

18 Q. Okay. All right. Is that like lateral or is it
19 hierarchical, like as far as positions?

20 A. No, it's promotions.

21 Q. Oh, okay. So you're -- it goes captain --

22 A. I'm over -- yeah. They all --

23 Q. Right. You oversee all of them, right?

24 A. Correct.

25 Q. Okay. Got it. So does the sergeant like lead them?

1 A. So he leads the CID division here. I have a sergeant and a
2 lieutenant down at the Child Crimes Unit that leads that division.

3 Q. Got it.

4 A. And then Langweiler, who will be a lieutenant here July 6th,
5 will lead also this division over here as well. So you have
6 sergeant, lieutenant, and they report to the captain.

7 Q. Okay. So the sergeants oversee the different divisions?

8 A. They're the first chain.

9 Q. First chain. Okay.

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. Got it. Thank you for explaining that.

12 And Sgt. Reim is over what division?

13 A. He's over Criminal Investigation Divisions here at the main
14 office.

15 Q. Got it. Okay. And could you tell me a little bit about your
16 training, what kind of training you have specifically?

17 A. Police academy training. It's over, I don't know, 700 hours
18 plus. Ongoing training, probably got about 5,000 hours total.

19 I'm a master peace officer. I achieved that in 7 years through
20 education and training hours. Typically it's a 20-year deal if
21 you have enough training. Okay. I mean that's pretty much it.

22 Q. Is any -- was any of that natural gas related?

23 A. No.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Zero.

1 Q. Have you ever, you know -- have you ever worked with Atmos
2 ever --

3 A. No.

4 Q. -- on an incident or anything like that? Okay.

5 A. No.

6 Q. And so -- okay, let's go -- start with what you experienced
7 on June 28th. I understand you were on scene.

8 A. Um-hum.

9 Q. Can you tell us, start us off like with your shift, how long
10 was your shift and like that day you started, what were you doing?

11 A. I reported to the office 8 a.m., approximately 8 a.m. We got
12 dispatched out to a child death, a 1-year-old that day, that
13 morning. I was on scene there for a little while. I'm a pretty
14 hands-on supervisor. I like to go out to scenes. Dealt with that
15 till about, oh, 1 o'clock or so maybe. Come back to the office,
16 get some paperwork done, and then I was actually going to head out
17 for the day and I got the message from the sergeant in patrol on
18 duty if I had seen the screen yet, which was no. Then I learned
19 there was an explosion. So instead of going home, I went out that
20 way.

21 Q. Which sergeant?

22 A. Nathan Holton.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. He's the sergeant on duty for patrol that day.

25 Q. Okay. And what time was that?

1 A. Actually, I'll tell you in a second here. It came out at
2 3:40. So right around 3:50, because I notified Jay Reim at 3:56
3 and I told him to go -- yeah, go head that way at 3:58.

4 Q. So 3:56 you told Reim?

5 A. Yeah. So once I got the call from the sergeant on duty,
6 because Jay Reim was already 42 that day, which means that he was
7 out of service, I called -- I sent Jay a text, said, hey, go ahead
8 and -- this is what's going on. And he said, do you need me to
9 respond? I said, please do so.

10 Q. Okay. How does Nathan Holt [sic] get notification?

11 A. So he's the patrol sergeant. Any 911 calls will come to --
12 through dispatch to the actual on-call district. They have access
13 to all calls in the entire county on the computer and also through
14 the radio traffic.

15 Q. Oh, okay. Right. So you headed out around 3:58?

16 A. I headed out -- I notified Jay Reim. Jay headed out there at
17 3:58. I had to get my stuff together, so -- I mean I can get you
18 exact times when I checked in service to head that way. I just
19 don't remember. Right around 4 o'clock, somewhere in there.

20 Q. You arrived on scene?

21 A. I arrived on scene, I don't know exactly what time, but I can
22 get you that information, have it pulled for you.

23 Q. How long would it have taken you? Like how fast --

24 A. According to my GPS, because I was looking for short routes
25 because of the traffic, took about 18 minutes, maybe.

1 Q. Okay. And so you arrived on scene, so go ahead and walk me
2 through what you -- when you first arrived on scene.

3 A. Once I got on scene, I met with Jay and said, what do you
4 got? He explained what we have. We were trying to decide is this
5 a fire marshal investigation or are we going to take over the
6 investigation, get resources. Once we figured out the chain,
7 that, you know, we're going to go ahead and lead it, and that was
8 pretty much it. We set up scene. Everybody stayed out and just
9 kind of let Jay do what he does best, and that's investigate.

10 Q. Did you interact with the fire department at all when you
11 arrived?

12 A. I did not. I talked to the fire marshal for about a minute
13 or two to understand what a pig is, because I was like -- this
14 sounds silly; I'm a city guy. But when I heard a pig, I'm like,
15 someone put a pig -- I'll be honest, like, what the heck? But
16 then they explained what it was, so I was educated at that point.
17 But that was probably my conversation with the fire marshal,
18 understanding what a pig was.

19 Q. Okay. And what did he explain it to be?

20 A. A large device, round device, heavy device that goes inside
21 the actual pipeline, I guess to flush stuff out or clean stuff
22 out, and that was about it.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. And I asked how did the -- how did this occur, do we have any
25 idea? Again, I'm clueless when it comes to that pipeline deal.

1 And said, maybe static or something touched metal to metal and it
2 caused the explosion. That's all I was told.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. So that's what I communicated up to my chain.

5 Q. Okay. How long did you stay on scene?

6 A. Until about 9 o'clock that night.

7 Q. Oh, till --

8 A. Till everybody was done and then left, bodies were gone. I
9 spent a lot of time with the father that showed up. He was a
10 district manager for one of the companies. Hang on a sec here.
11 I'll just -- so you guys can see it. I don't know what company it
12 is. This was on the news, but at the time I didn't know that.

13 Q. Oh, Bobcat --

14 A. That guy right there, his son. He showed up. He drove out
15 from the Bobcat, is that what it is?

16 MR. SMITH: No, that's FESCO.

17 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

18 Q. FESCO.

19 A. FESCO. So he drove up from El Campo -- someone sent me that.
20 But he drove up from El Campo to -- and like we had to keep him
21 calm, because --

22 Q. Right.

23 A. -- he wasn't doing well.

24 Q. What time around was that when you were with him?

25 A. With him?

1 Q. Um-hum.

2 A. At least a couple hours into it.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. And I -- for also training wise, I'll tell you guys I was a
5 team leader for hostage negotiations, so I've been
6 (indiscernible). My expertise is in talking, keeping him.

7 Q. Right.

8 A. Also I'm a certified forensic interviewer, interrogator as
9 well. So talking to people is kind of my natural act prior to
10 this career. So I spent time with him to keep him calm, and it
11 worked out well, I guess.

12 Q. Okay. So you stayed the rest of the time with him, until 9
13 o'clock?

14 A. The majority of the time with him, let Jay do his deal.
15 We're big about letting your investigators do their job unless you
16 see differently where I think I need to intervene. He was doing
17 fine. We were waiting on the federal -- FBI to show up, see if
18 they were going to assist. And that was basically it. So I spoke
19 with their -- I don't remember if she's an ASAC. I can't
20 remember. Deb Michaels, I think her name is. Anyways, her team
21 showed up about 6. Six people showed up, and they went on scene,
22 checked things out, and then that was pretty much it.

23 Q. Did you -- how closely does your team work with the FBI, or
24 do they -- are they independent?

25 A. What?

1 Q. How closely does your team work with the FBI that day? Did
2 they work together, or was it separate?

3 A. So it's separate. I mean it needs to be separate because you
4 got -- I mean you work together but you're separate
5 investigations.

6 Q. Right.

7 A. Okay. They have expertise in areas we don't. But, you know,
8 so it's one of those things. But we work with them quite often in
9 other areas, in child crimes, my unit does, but --

10 Q. But on that day were they asking you questions and stuff like
11 that or --

12 A. You know, she -- I talked to her for a minute or two and
13 then, again, I sent her up to talk to Jay because we want to keep
14 in the chain of command, how we work it, you know, to be doing any
15 jumping because things start getting messed up. So Jay dealt with
16 her more than I did. I talked with her afterwards because I know
17 her, and that was pretty much it.

18 Q. Okay. What did you learn about the accident after you were
19 done, like towards the end?

20 A. What did I learn?

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. What a pig was. No, I'm sorry. You know, something -- I
23 mean something happened, some type of accident occurred. We don't
24 know how this something happened. I mean something caused the
25 explosion, something caused, you know, two people to die and two

1 to the hospital.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. You know, that's -- honestly, that's all I can say. Now if
4 you -- I mean that's not my expertise.

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. So autopsies will tell us a little different, hopefully. But
7 that's all I really know. I know there was a guy in the actual
8 heavy equipment that they spoke to. He was pretty tore up
9 emotionally. I'm not sure how much -- I haven't reviewed the
10 information yet, how much they actually got from him and what he
11 saw.

12 Q. When you say they, who spoke?

13 A. It would have been Jay's team, the criminal investigator.

14 Q. Jay's team. He said he didn't interview him.

15 A. What's that?

16 Q. He said they didn't interview him.

17 A. Okay. Because I know he was -- I know the guy was pretty
18 messed up. We had to have a chaplain come out and spend time with
19 him, so -- and they were supposed to eventually talk to him if
20 they didn't do it. So I don't know if they have or not.

21 Q. Right. Okay. So you didn't learn any other details other
22 than something happened?

23 A. Something -- a piece of metal could have sparked it, and that
24 was pretty much it. I mean there was no more than that. And
25 someone mentioned it could have been human error. I don't know.

1 That's -- that was it.

2 Q. Okay. How did -- did you -- when you said you worked with
3 FBI, did they tell you why they ruled out any criminal --

4 A. They didn't say they ruled anything out.

5 Q. Didn't rule anything -- okay. They didn't say any --

6 A. They didn't say that at all. No.

7 Q. Okay. They didn't tell you anything?

8 A. Uh-uh. No. One of the bomb tech FBI agents was looking or,
9 you know, walking around just kind of trying to put some sense to
10 some things, but no one said anything about ruling anything out.

11 Q. Okay. While you were on scene was anyone doing any gas
12 monitoring, checking the area for gas?

13 A. So that came -- so we were on scene. We -- there was an
14 odor. And two gentlemen from the Railroad Commission asked
15 everybody to go ahead and step out of the scene because there was
16 an odor and they were concerned. I'm not sure what that concern
17 was. And they had somebody from Atmos come over about an hour
18 into it, brought some equipment -- this was later on in the day --
19 and scanned it. He said it was okay and they thought that maybe
20 there was a shaft that was open but they weren't sure. But
21 everything was fine. Because obviously it's not our background,
22 so everybody stood out until further notice.

23 Q. Okay. And how -- when did that occur? You arrived around,
24 you said, maybe 4:20.

25 A. Somewhere in there. I can get you -- I'll have dispatch pull

1 it. I just --

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. Yeah. What time did all that occur?

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. That was probably a couple hours into it.

6 Q. A couple hours into it?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. Okay. And did you smell any odor after that?

9 A. There was -- I mean there was distinct odor. It -- I mean

10 there was distinct odor. I don't know what it was.

11 Q. Throughout the whole time or --

12 A. I'm sorry?

13 Q. Throughout the whole time?

14 A. Um-hum.

15 Q. Okay. You were there from 4 to 9?

16 A. I was there from -- yeah, I was there all night.

17 Q. Yeah. So you smelled the odor. Okay.

18 A. When you're in the crime scene area, which was -- have you

19 been there yet?

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. Okay. So you know the yard?

22 Q. Right.

23 A. We could smell it in there, maybe a little bit outside the

24 fence area. But where I was eventually standing with the dad, you

25 could not.

1 Q. You were standing where next to the dad -- with the dad? You
2 were outside?

3 A. So you come through -- yeah, so dad -- I was talking to the
4 Railroad Commission guys about the odor piece, actually. I think
5 it was around that same time. We seen a guy in green come up
6 pretty fast, like he had a mission. So Chief Bristow intercepted
7 him first and I immediately broke off and went to go with him,
8 too, because we didn't know what we're dealing with.

9 Q. Right.

10 A. And then that's when we learned Randy -- his name's Randy.
11 He was the father of one of the deceased in there. And then so I
12 took him back further towards the road and had him stay there and
13 talked to him out there for a while.

14 Q. Okay. And you didn't smell any gas there?

15 A. No. We did not, no.

16 Q. Okay. Across the road?

17 A. We weren't across. We were inside --

18 Q. Oh, I see.

19 A. You go down that drive to the fence?

20 Q. Yes. Right.

21 A. We were in the drive.

22 Q. Right.

23 A. Standing there probably about 30 yards from the actual
24 roadway.

25 Q. Okay. Yeah.

1 A. So, but no, we didn't smell any there.

2 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. I will now turn it to you. Do you
3 have any questions?

4 BY MR. SMITH:

5 Q. About the reports, you haven't seen any preliminary reports
6 from Sgt. Reim?

7 A. We won't for a while.

8 Q. Okay. Is that who you would receive that from, is from
9 Sgt. Reim?

10 A. Correct. It'll go through the chain for approval. Since
11 there's a lieutenant -- I still would review it, but I'll
12 (indiscernible) take it from there.

13 Q. Right. And you mentioned a chaplain was sent. Is that --

14 A. Multiple times. He left and we had him come back.

15 Q. Okay. Is that somebody -- a chaplain that works for the
16 sheriff's department or just --

17 A. No. Volunteer fire department.

18 Q. A volunteer. Okay.

19 A. Or a church, depending -- dispatch will notify somebody and
20 they have all records of that. There's two that showed up, male
21 and female.

22 Q. On call?

23 A. Um-hum.

24 Q. But they weren't within the scene? They were outside the
25 scene, just --

1 A. They're outside the scene.

2 Q. -- for support?

3 A. Correct.

4 Q. Okay.

5 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

6 Q. So when Sgt. Reim finishes the report, you were saying it
7 goes through a level of review. Can you describe that review
8 process?

9 A. So the process would be the lieutenant would take a look at
10 it. So typically Sgt. Reim wouldn't be the lead investigator, it
11 would be one of his guys or gals that's leading. So it would go
12 to Jay first, Jay Reim, and then it goes up the chain. So once
13 Jay approves it, I'll take a look at it or the lieutenant will
14 take a look at it and review it. If we see anything that we need
15 explanation on, more detail, before anything gets filed, they will
16 do that since like this type of case. But typically cases, it
17 goes to Jay. Jay's very thorough at what he does. And once Jay
18 signs off and it's done, and I'll go back just review them, just
19 to -- just review.

20 Q. Right.

21 A. But my stamp isn't on it, but there is a -- in Athena -- we
22 use Athena system. So Athena, so anytime anybody goes into the
23 system, there's actually a bookmark of who goes into it and looks
24 at what. So --

25 Q. So after you look at it, then what? Does it go -- move

1 forward somehow or --

2 A. This one, after I look at it, it'll move forward because of
3 the nature of what we're dealing with right now.

4 Q. Oh, okay. But not normally?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Okay. It'll stop at you?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. Okay. So then it moves forward to?

9 A. That's it.

10 Q. Sorry. For this one, this will move forward to -- you said
11 it'll move forward to somebody else?

12 A. Once I tell him it's done, it's done.

13 Q. Oh.

14 A. If there's any criminal charges on the state side, we'll send
15 it to the grand jury or file charges, whatever.

16 Q. Oh, I see. Okay.

17 A. And that's about it.

18 Q. I see. Okay. And the report will include what kind of
19 documentation exactly?

20 A. So you're going to have a call for service incident report,
21 which is going to label the city, state, CFS number, names, any
22 info, charges, witnesses, you name it. There will be a narrative
23 from the lead investigator. There'll be supplements from -- that
24 need to be done. It'll have like an evidence section with all the
25 documentation of evidence. It'll show approval status on there.

1 What else? I think that's pretty much it. It'll show
2 attachments. So you have evidence, CCSO digital evidence, which
3 is Crime Scene downstairs, property room. Then you have
4 attachments, sometimes you put attachments, pictures in there.
5 Sometimes you'll download CCSO digital, videos, etc. So it'll
6 show basically the entire investigation and also chain of custody,
7 basically.

8 Q. Okay. So when you arrived on scene, first thing you saw were
9 the bodies, where they laid? What did you see when you --

10 A. First thing I seen was -- I spoke to Jay and tried to figure
11 out what happened; hey, what's going on? Get a brief. And then
12 when I looked through the fence, I saw two white sheets over two
13 individuals and an orange device, which was the pig.

14 Q. Right.

15 A. And then obviously machinery. Later on, before a storm hit,
16 I had to cover the bodies up with tarps. I did have the fire
17 department do that. Well, gave them to us to go do that because
18 there was a storm coming in.

19 Q. Right.

20 A. I forgot to mention that, but -- that was about it. I mean,
21 obviously there was somebody's -- I mean, what's your -- I don't
22 know what you guys deal with, but a piece of brain -- there was a
23 body part, there was brain and some stuff like that laying out
24 there, so --

25 Q. And did you see the pipeline?

1 A. Um-hum.

2 Q. What did you observe about the pipeline?

3 A. Well, there was -- I saw white, and then there was -- there's
4 some pipes in it that are -- I don't know if they were in the
5 ground, but they were laying there about, I don't know -- just
6 laying across in front of the actual pipes to the -- if I'm
7 looking -- so I'm looking at you, and there was the actual white
8 pipe, the actual heavy machine was there, the pig was right here.
9 There was a bunch of stuff -- the pipes coming out of the ground,
10 there was like a -- there was another pipe on the ground off to --
11 offsetting the actual white. I don't know if that was attached to
12 the ground or if it was coming up, but it was laying there, kind
13 of like a rust pipe, about 3 or 4 inches.

14 Q. And no one told you what that was for?

15 A. That's the one that someone thought someone sparked. That's
16 what I was told, but I don't know.

17 Q. Okay. In the white pipeline, did you see a door open at all?

18 A. Doors were closed before I got there. I thought somebody
19 said that somebody closed them. Only two that I think someone
20 closed them before we arrived.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. I thought someone said that.

23 Q. Okay. But you observed --

24 MR. SMITH: That's my understanding as well, someone closed
25 the door.

- 1 CPT FONTANA: Yeah.
- 2 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:
- 3 Q. But you observed that when you saw it?
- 4 A. Closed?
- 5 Q. Yeah.
- 6 A. Yes.
- 7 Q. Okay.
- 8 A. We didn't touch any of the piping at all. Yeah, we didn't go
9 over there and turn -- there was a couple, but we didn't touch
10 that, not that I know of.
- 11 Q. Okay. And Jay -- your team at all, nobody touched the pipe
12 or anything like that?
- 13 A. No.
- 14 Q. Okay. Good.
- 15 A. Crime Scene -- Christina went out there and took pics. I
16 don't think she touched anything. I think she just did
17 measurements and pics, if I recall.
- 18 Q. Okay. Yeah, okay. Great. Is there anything else you want
19 to -- that you thought was unique about that situation or that you
20 want to tell us?
- 21 A. No, I mean it's like -- obviously we all want to know what
22 happened.
- 23 Q. Yeah.
- 24 A. So, I mean --
- 25 Q. And you were -- were you happy with like how the response

1 was, the emergency response?

2 A. I believe so, yes. Everybody from our end, from their end,
3 the Railroad Commission, everybody, everybody took it very
4 serious. It was good.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Appropriate, very appropriate.

7 Q. Okay, great. You had no concerns about safety at all when
8 you were on scene?

9 A. No. Everybody had their hardhats on their side, their
10 orange -- yellow vest. They kept to wherever they're supposed to
11 be. We communicated who we needed to talk with. Fire department
12 did their part, they were safe. I know they did a drone video, I
13 thought someone did. I don't know who was that. It may have been
14 Wylie fire may have done that.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. He'll usually send a link. I haven't seen that yet. So
17 there should be a drone a video. What else? I'll be honest, the
18 only thing I said that -- the only thing that irritated me a
19 little bit was some of the chattering. I had one of my guys go
20 tell them to stop, because we had a grieving dad. That was
21 probably more my issue than anything.

22 Q. Oh, okay.

23 A. They apologized, but that was -- yeah, I was --

24 Q. Chattering by who?

25 A. Just individuals that were out there. I'm not sure exactly

1 who they were, but --

2 Q. Guys working? Okay, okay. Got it.

3 A. -- I just told him to go take care of it now before I do it.

4 It's nicer from him than me.

5 MR. SMITH: Especially with the father there.

6 CPT FONTANA: Hmm?

7 MR. SMITH: With the father there.

8 CPT FONTANA: Correct.

9 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

10 CPT FONTANA: Right where that picture was taken.

11 MS. GUNARATNAM: Right.

12 BY MR. SMITH:

13 Q. Would you all get anything from the FBI? Would they send you
14 any closure document on the visit, let's say?

15 A. There will be no report. We've asked that question, is there
16 a report? We may get an email from them, but there was nothing
17 for them -- I mean there may be, but I can reach out to Deb
18 Michaels today and find out if they're going to send anything.
19 But --

20 Q. That's fine. I'm curious if it's typical that you --

21 A. Typically, if they -- you know, depending on what they did,
22 yes, they would. But in this case, I don't believe they are.

23 Q. And then finally, just for discussion on who is going to take
24 the lead investigation role, and you said there was some
25 discussion, you decided that your team was going to take it. Does

1 that immediately mean that you all have control of the scene and
2 now it was up to you to determine who comes, who has access, who
3 doesn't have access?

4 A. Correct.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Yeah. We take care of control and custody of the scene, in
7 and out. So yes.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Once we identify it's going to be us, yes.

10 Q. Once your team identifies that, are people then escorted out
11 of the crime scene?

12 A. People aren't let in unless they're part of -- we know who
13 they are and they're part our team. So -- and the only people we
14 allowed in was the Railroad Commission, the FBI, and my unit, and
15 whoever got there before us. It would be fire obviously was
16 there, EMS was obviously there, they -- that was all prior to me
17 even getting there. I'm not sure if anybody from your group who
18 was in the crime scene. When I was there, nobody from your group
19 was in there. The only people that were in there that were, I
20 call civilian capacity was Railroad Commission, I believe. Well,
21 actually, your guy went and did the scanning.

22 Q. The survey, yep.

23 A. Yeah. And then but the bodies were there. Yeah, he had gone
24 in for that. He was escorted in, if I remember.

25 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

1 Q. Did you talk to Atmos at all on scene?

2 A. Um-hum.

3 Q. And what discussions happened with Atmos?

4 A. Atmos? We talked about the -- they went and did the scan.
5 The risk management guy, talked to him. It was more of, you know,
6 hey, can you get us lighting if we needed it. The fire was going
7 to come back out just in case, because we were waiting for the ME
8 to show up, too. That's another person that showed up, ME. And
9 then also the person that took the bodies, too, from people. The
10 ME was on scene doing her part and then the bodies -- the van
11 stayed outside and he went in and obviously helped bring them out.

12 We talked about (indiscernible) notification, because that
13 was important. We wanted to make sure families were notified ASAP
14 because of the helicopters flying around. We wanted to
15 (indiscernible) that way. They notified somebody at the
16 hospital -- did one of your guys go to the hospital, if I
17 remember? I mean one of your -- I'm trying to remember who.

18 MR. SMITH: One of our supervisors, I believe, went to the
19 hospital.

20 CPT FONTANA: Yeah. We had four people; two deceased, two at
21 the hospital. And your guys helped us get that notification, I
22 think. So another company notified their family member
23 immediately before we did. I don't remember who that was, what
24 company that was. Because obviously the sheriff's real big about
25 us making sure that we --

1 MR. SMITH: Sure.

2 CPT FONTANA: -- we want the troopers to notify.

3 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

4 CPT FONTANA: But yeah.

5 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

6 Q. Okay. So you primarily worked with Atmos on notifying the
7 families?

8 A. Notifying family, securing the scene, nobody's allowed in --

9 Q. Right.

10 A. -- scanning, any thoughts on their end of it. They didn't
11 know. That was basically it. I mean, it was --

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. -- due to business related, that was it. Otherwise -- yeah,
14 that was it.

15 MS. GUNARATNAM: All right. Any more questions? All right.

16 MR. SMITH: No.

17 CPT FONTANA: Did you guys get my -- I know I was told your
18 point of contact. You guys get me info? Did she send that to you
19 guys?

20 MS. GUNARATNAM: Yes. Do you have a -- did you give me a
21 card?

22 CPT FONTANA: I'll go get one for you. It's in my office
23 there. Anything else?

24 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. I'll end the --

25 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: NATURAL GAS-FUELED EXPLOSION
 DURING ROUTINE MAINTENANCE,
 FARMERSVILLE, TEXAS
 ON JUNE 28, 2021
 Interview of Chris Fontana

ACCIDENT NO.: PLD21FR002

PLACE: McKinney, Texas

DATE: June 30, 2021

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.



Kay Maurer
Transcriber