

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

\*

NATURAL GAS-FUELED EXPLOSION \*

DURING ROUTINE MAINTENANCE, \* Accident No.: PLD21FR002

FARMERSVILLE, TEXAS \*

ON JUNE 28, 2021 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: KIM MORRIS, Fire Chief  
Farmersville Fire Department

Collin 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

(2:54 p.m. CDT)

1  
2  
3 MS. GUNARATNAM: Good afternoon. 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 2:54 p.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. And today we are interviewing --

11 MR. MORRIS: Kim Morris.

12 MS. GUNARATNAM: Can you spell that for the transcriber?

13 MR. MORRIS: K-I-M, M-O-R-R-I-S.

14 MS. GUNARATNAM: Thank you. And you are free to have a  
15 representative to consult with during the interview. Is there  
16 anyone you would like here with you in the interview?

17 MR. MORRIS: No.

18 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Just so you know, the purpose of this  
19 investigation is not to assign fault or any blame, liability.  
20 We're here to -- our sole mission is to improve transportation  
21 safety and prevent this from ever happening again. So, however,  
22 we cannot offer any guarantee of confidentiality or immunity from  
23 any legal proceedings by other agencies, whether local, state or  
24 federal. This interview will be transcribed. I will send you a  
25 copy of that transcript and you can make any corrections if the

1 transcriber got it wrong, and that will be -- once you're done  
2 with that, that will be posted on our public docket.

3 MR. MORRIS: Okay.

4 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. So here, I'll just go ahead and start  
5 with who else is in the room with us, is -- go ahead.

6 MR. SMITH: Greg Smith with Atmos Energy. I'm director of  
7 system integrity & compliance.

8 MS. GUNARATNAM: Thank you.

9 INTERVIEW OF KIM MORRIS

10 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

11 Q. Okay. So just starting with your professional background,  
12 just tell us a little bit about yourself, how many years you've,  
13 you know, been as a fire chief, and anything else.

14 A. Fire chief of Farmersville Fire Department, I assumed full-  
15 time responsibility there in 2010. I'm an intermediate  
16 firefighter. I started out in McKinney in 1972, and I've been  
17 around the industry, in and out. I'm also a certified paramedic.

18 Q. Can you tell me what you currently -- your training is  
19 currently, that you've done?

20 A. Like I said, I'm an intermediate firefighter, fully  
21 certified, you know, with Texas Commission on Fire Protection.

22 Q. Okay. And do you have HAZWOPER training?

23 A. No.

24 Q. No? Okay. Have you done any specific training on natural  
25 gas?

1 A. Yes, through the fire academy and so forth. And we've had  
2 special events where a gas company came out and talked to us and  
3 did some training as well.

4 Q. How often did you -- when's the last time you did that?

5 A. Probably a year ago.

6 Q. Okay. And how often do you do that?

7 A. At least once a year.

8 Q. Okay. Can you give me a little more details about that  
9 training, what it entails? Is it 1 day? Is it several days?

10 A. It's just 1 day. A representative comes out and talks about  
11 gas leaks and so forth, and how we're to approach it or not  
12 approach it, you know, and so forth. It's pretty generalized. We  
13 haven't had the opportunity to go to Gas City yet, but we're  
14 hoping to be able to do that very soon.

15 Q. Okay. So you've never gone to Gas City?

16 A. No.

17 Q. Okay. And that rep is an Atmos rep -- representative?

18 A. Um-hum.

19 Q. Okay. And they come to the National Fire Academy?

20 A. They have, yes.

21 Q. Yeah. Okay. That's where you take the gas training. Okay.  
22 And who -- so how big is your department?

23 A. I have -- there's 2 of us that are full-time, and I have  
24 approximately 18 volunteers assigned to the department.

25 Q. Okay. And of the 2 full-time and 18 volunteers, what kind of

1 training do they have?

2 A. Same as me, the other full-time man is an intermediate  
3 firefighter, too, and has been through the fire academy, TCFP  
4 certified. I have some others that work for other paid  
5 departments and they volunteer; they have the same training and so  
6 forth.

7 Q. Okay. Do all of them attend this National Fire Academy  
8 training?

9 A. Only about five of us have done that.

10 Q. Okay. And they -- only those five have been doing it for the  
11 last --

12 A. Right.

13 Q. -- annual? Okay. Do they teach you during that training how  
14 to do gas detection or gas monitoring?

15 A. Yeah. Well, I mean we have a gas monitor we use and so  
16 forth.

17 Q. Okay. Yeah. Do you regularly calibrate that monitor?

18 A. I don't. My assistant does.

19 Q. Okay. And that's your -- the assistant fire chief is the  
20 second full-time?

21 A. Um-hum.

22 Q. Yeah. Okay. And what procedures do you have in place for  
23 natural gas, responding to a natural gas incident?

24 A. Basically, if we get a callout for natural gas, first thing  
25 is we find out if the gas is still flowing, if there's fire and so

1 forth. If there is, then we maintain our distance and we start  
2 setting up ICS from that point.

3 Q. Okay. And if I requested this, do you have this procedure in  
4 writing?

5 A. Um-hum.

6 Q. Do you have a natural gas procedure?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. All right. I'll be -- I'll send you an email requesting  
9 that.

10 A. Okay.

11 Q. Okay. So let's go to the day of the incident, June 28th.  
12 Walk me through your day of when you started -- when you started  
13 your day, and then when you first heard of the incident and  
14 everything.

15 A. I normally come in about 7 o'clock in the morning and go over  
16 emails and reports from the previous shift. I believe we had had  
17 one medical call prior to this. Then the call came in for a gas  
18 explosion at 1537. And myself, and we had one other man that I  
19 had working with me, took the engine. We were heading out to the  
20 scene. I was advised by dispatch there was possibly one dead and  
21 several injured. As I turned onto 2756, she advised me that there  
22 was no active fire. Normally I have mutual aid with Princeton  
23 Fire Department, and I had them coming as well. So I recalled  
24 them.

25 Q. Okay.



1 A. And as we came on scene, the fire marshal was there and  
2 several Atmos people walking around outside the compound. First  
3 thing I did was ensure that there was no active gas or fire. And  
4 he said, no, there wasn't.

5 So at that point I kind of shifted into my paramedic role and  
6 went in. I saw three people lying down. The first two I checked  
7 were pulseless. The third one was lying face down. When I bent  
8 down to check his carotid, he began to moan, so -- and slowly came  
9 around. He kept telling me he's all right, he's all right, you  
10 know. Hey, you're not all right. So we got him back-boarded and  
11 loaded into the ambulance.

12 And then Mike Sullivan, the police chief, and I noticed there  
13 was another man knelt down further away, and we walked over to  
14 him. And apparently he was the bobcat operator. And he  
15 definitely was not with us. You know, he was in total shock. Led  
16 him out, and then a DPS officer asked me if I had a counselor I  
17 could contact. So I contacted them, and they came out and worked  
18 with him and told me the same thing when they were done. So I  
19 told the bobcat foreman, I said, look, he needs to go to ER. I  
20 can call out another ambulance or you can take him, but he is  
21 going to have to go to the ER. So the foreman said, well, I'll  
22 just drive him then.

23 Q. That was the DPS officer --

24 A. Um-hum.

25 Q. -- who drove him to the hospital?

- 1 A. No, the bobcat foreman.
- 2 Q. Oh. I mean, but who took him? Who took the bobcat foreman?
- 3 Oh, no, the bobcat foreman --
- 4 A. Yeah, took the bobcat --
- 5 Q. Bobcat driver. Okay. Got it.
- 6 A. Yeah.
- 7 Q. Okay. All right. Sorry.
- 8 A. And the place was sealed off with police tape, so we never
- 9 went back inside. They asked me to stay there with our engine
- 10 just in case, you know, anything were to happen. So we weren't
- 11 released until like a quarter to 6 that evening.
- 12 Q. So you were -- when you went to the site, how many
- 13 firefighters were with you?
- 14 A. One.
- 15 Q. Okay. So it was just you and one other firefighter?
- 16 A. Right. Then I had another volunteer show up, private, in his
- 17 private vehicle. And then I had two more show up in another
- 18 truck.
- 19 Q. What time -- do you have their times?
- 20 A. No. Dispatch only records the first one.
- 21 Q. Oh, okay. So you called three other volunteers to come on
- 22 scene?
- 23 A. Yeah. It's paged out through our system.
- 24 Q. Oh, okay.
- 25 A. So everybody gets the alert that there was a gas explosion

1 and so forth.

2 Q. So a total of five firefighters were on scene?

3 A. Yes, ma'am.

4 Q. Okay. All right. Did they all leave together?

5 A. I sent three of them home, and the -- I kept one there with  
6 me.

7 Q. Okay. So when you -- let's just backtrack a little bit.

8 When you arrived on scene you wanted to make sure that the gas was  
9 shut off.

10 A. Um-hum.

11 Q. Who did you talk to?

12 A. It was one of the Atmos guys standing out there. I'm not  
13 sure who he was.

14 Q. Sure. And what did he tell you?

15 A. He just told me, no, there wasn't any gas leak, everything  
16 was secure.

17 Q. Okay. Did you take out any of your gas monitors or gas --

18 A. No, ma'am.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. No, I didn't.

21 Q. Okay. Did Atmos show you any -- were they monitoring at the  
22 time?

23 A. I don't -- I didn't see that.

24 Q. Okay. And so he told you the gas was shut off. You didn't  
25 see a fire --

- 1 A. No.
- 2 Q. -- right? And then you went into paramedic mode, right?
- 3 A. Right.
- 4 Q. Okay. So when you were on scene first, a state fire --
- 5 county fire marshal was there.
- 6 A. Um-hum.
- 7 Q. And Department of Public Safety was there?
- 8 A. Not yet.
- 9 Q. Not yet. Okay.
- 10 A. He came afterwards.
- 11 Q. He came after, after you --
- 12 A. Yeah. I think there was the fire marshal and I believe there
- 13 was one deputy on scene ahead of me.
- 14 Q. Okay. Deputy from the fire marshal?
- 15 A. Collin County Sheriff.
- 16 Q. From Collin County. Right, right, right. Okay.
- 17 So after you assisted with the injured, you -- so you checked
- 18 first the fatals -- the fatalities?
- 19 A. Um-hum.
- 20 Q. And then you went to the first injured guy?
- 21 A. The third one, yeah.
- 22 Q. Third one. Yeah. Put him in the ambulance, and then went to
- 23 the cab driver of the bobcat.
- 24 A. Right.
- 25 Q. And then checked him out, called a counselor. The counselor,

- 1 did he come on scene?
- 2 A. Yes.
- 3 Q. And then took him to the hospital, the foreman?
- 4 A. The counselors didn't, no. The bobcat foreman took him.
- 5 Q. Foreman took him to the hospital. Right after the counselor
- 6 talked to him and everything.
- 7 A. Um-hum.
- 8 Q. Okay. Did the injured tell you anything when you interacted
- 9 with them about what happened?
- 10 A. No.
- 11 Q. Nothing?
- 12 A. Uh-uh.
- 13 Q. Didn't say any statements, nothing?
- 14 A. No. He was pretty much out of it, too. He just kept saying
- 15 he was all right.
- 16 Q. Okay. When you arrived on scene, did you smell anything?
- 17 A. No.
- 18 Q. You didn't smell anything?
- 19 A. Uh-uh.
- 20 Q. Okay. And were there any other fire departments on scene?
- 21 A. No, I -- like I said, I had had Princeton en route, but I
- 22 went ahead and disregarded them since there was no active fire.
- 23 Q. I see. We heard Wylie Fire Department was there.
- 24 A. Wylie fire marshal came.
- 25 Q. Fire marshal. Okay. When did he come?

- 1 A. Oh, it was later on.
- 2 Q. Okay.
- 3 A. Yeah.
- 4 Q. Did you see their drone? They had a drone --
- 5 A. No.
- 6 Q. Okay. So when -- did you interact with him, the Wylie fire  
7 marshal?
- 8 A. A little bit, but --
- 9 Q. Okay. Did he -- I mean what was the conversation that  
10 happened?
- 11 A. Just hello, you know, how's things going, you know, this and  
12 that. It wasn't anything to do with the scene or so forth.
- 13 Q. Did you tell him what happened?
- 14 A. No.
- 15 Q. Okay. So he came later.
- 16 A. Um-hum.
- 17 Q. Did he -- do you know where he went? Wait. Do you know who  
18 called him?
- 19 A. No.
- 20 Q. Oh, okay. It wasn't you?
- 21 A. No.
- 22 Q. Okay. Did you see where -- did he leave the scene or do you  
23 know what happened to him after you interacted?
- 24 A. He was pretty much there for --
- 25 Q. The rest of the time?

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. Okay. Okay. So when you came on scene, did you -- what did  
3 you observe of the scene?

4 A. We pulled into the driveway since the fire marshal was parked  
5 in the yard there, and I believe I -- there was a deputy on scene,  
6 you know. And there were some Atmos trucks and some of them  
7 standing outside the compound.

8 Q. Outside of the fence?

9 A. Um-hum.

10 Q. Okay. And did you see the equipment? Was anything -- any  
11 vehicles running, any equipment running?

12 A. No, none of the vehicles were running. Uh-uh.

13 Q. No vehicles running. Did you specifically check for that,  
14 the vehicles --

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. Okay. And did you notice where the equipment was located on  
17 the ground?

18 A. There was the bobcat sitting over in the corner of the  
19 compound and there was a pickup truck that was backed in there.  
20 But that's the only equipment I remember seeing at the time.

21 Q. Okay. And did you notice anything with the white pipeline?

22 A. There was something attached to it, but I had no idea what it  
23 was, you know. I didn't go over near that.

24 Q. Did you see the door, the trap door to the pipeline?

25 A. No.

- 1 Q. Okay. You didn't know if it was open or closed?
- 2 A. No.
- 3 Q. Okay.
- 4 A. I didn't.
- 5 Q. Okay.
- 6 A. You know, at that point I knew it was going to be a crime  
7 scene and, you know, I told my people to go ahead and hang back,  
8 you know, to keep the area secure.
- 9 Q. And when you spoke to the county fire marshal, did you have  
10 discussions with him?
- 11 A. Yeah, just briefly. He said that he was coming over the  
12 bridge when the call came out, you know, and was like maybe a half  
13 mile, quarter mile from it. So, he got there pretty quick.
- 14 Q. And did he find out -- do you know how many minutes he was  
15 there before you?
- 16 A. I don't know.
- 17 Q. Okay. Did he tell you anything about the scene?
- 18 A. Just that -- same thing, that there was no fire or gas, but  
19 that I had some fatalities out there.
- 20 Q. And that he was taking over the site? Did he say that?
- 21 A. No, he didn't.
- 22 Q. Oh, okay. But is it that once he's on scene, he takes  
23 control?
- 24 A. Basically. Yeah, whoever's first on scene takes control and  
25 then it's passed on --



- 1 Q. Right.
- 2 A. -- you know, as need be. In this case, since there was no  
3 fire at the gas leak, I didn't assume command of it.
- 4 Q. Okay. Yeah. Okay. So you stayed till about 5:45?
- 5 A. Um-hum.
- 6 Q. Yeah. Okay. And everybody from the fire department left?
- 7 A. Yes, ma'am.
- 8 Q. Where did you go after that?
- 9 A. Back to the station; wrote up my report.
- 10 Q. Okay. I'll be requesting that report afterwards.
- 11 A. Okay. I've got it here.
- 12 Q. Oh, okay.
- 13 A. I figured you would be.
- 14 Q. Great. Thanks.
- 15 A. And here's --
- 16 Q. Is there any more to this report?
- 17 A. -- shows the times. These are the actual --
- 18 Q. Firefighters?
- 19 A. Paramedics that were from AMR that were on scene.
- 20 Q. Oh, okay. Great. And they're from AMR?
- 21 A. Um-hum.
- 22 Q. And they handled the injured. Okay. I think I have their  
23 supervisor's name. Do you call -- does the fire department call  
24 AMR?
- 25 A. No, dispatch does.

1 Q. Dispatch does. Okay. And dispatch, I understand, is -- your  
2 dispatch is in the fire department and you handle the police and  
3 fire for Farmersville?

4 A. The what now?

5 Q. Dispatch?

6 A. Dispatch is at the sheriff's office.

7 Q. At the sheriff's? Oh, right.

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. And they handle both fire --

10 A. Right.

11 Q. Okay. All right. Okay.

12 A. Now, in this case, when there's injured, they do a rolldown,  
13 where the call is immediately transferred to AMR. I think their  
14 home office, their Dispatch Center's in Dallas. And then they  
15 dispatch the ambulances.

16 Q. Okay. And then do you know where the injured went to?

17 A. Both of them were taken to Medical City McKinney.

18 Q. Okay. And -- all right. Did you work at all with the  
19 county, Collins County Sheriff's Office while you were on scene?

20 A. Not a whole -- I mean, they asked -- there was a house next  
21 door and the people kept coming close, and they asked me would I  
22 go over there and tell the people they're all right and to please,  
23 you know, maintain their distance from the scene. So I did that,  
24 you know. That's about all I had with the county.

25 Q. Did you talk to Atmos at all --

- 1 A. No.
- 2 Q. -- in the duration? Okay.
- 3 A. Uh-uh.
- 4 Q. Did you ask them to do any gas monitoring? Atmos  
5 specifically.
- 6 A. I didn't, no.
- 7 Q. Okay. Do you know of anyone or did you see them doing it?
- 8 A. Uh-uh.
- 9 Q. No? Okay. And do you know where the closest house was to  
10 that yard?
- 11 A. It was to the east, probably maybe 2-, 3,000 feet from it.
- 12 Q. Okay. And do you know if there's more neighborhoods, like,  
13 close by?
- 14 A. I know the lady that lives on the other side of the bridge  
15 there. But no, that's about it.
- 16 Q. Is that it?
- 17 A. Yeah.
- 18 Q. So how -- besides those two houses, what's the closest  
19 neighborhood? What's the next closest neighborhood? Is it about  
20 a mile away, 2 miles?
- 21 A. Yeah, it's a couple miles away.
- 22 Q. A couple miles?
- 23 A. It's not a neighborhood per se. You know, there's just  
24 houses and a bunch of those have land, you know, attached to them.
- 25 Q. Okay. How often -- have you responded to gas incidents

1 before?

2 A. Um-hum.

3 Q. Yeah. What type of incidents do you usually respond to?

4 A. Normally it's a contract crew that breaks into a line and we  
5 go out there and secure the area till Atmos arrives on scene.

6 Sometimes they'll -- Atmos will tell me they're on the scene and  
7 request my presence there with an engine. We'll just kind of  
8 stand by while they do their thing.

9 Q. Okay. So if you're first on scene before Atmos, walk me  
10 through the procedure for that.

11 A. If I'm first on scene, then we'll take out our gas monitor  
12 and try to determine, you know, how strong it is, what type of  
13 line it's coming from and so forth, and relay that to dispatch so  
14 they can pass that on to Atmos.

15 Q. And then call Atmos on scene?

16 A. Um-hum.

17 Q. So, say -- so when you go -- as you're with your gas monitor,  
18 at what point do you tell dispatch to call Atmos?

19 A. Oh, they're usually right on calling them, you know.

20 Q. If you're detecting gas?

21 A. Uh-huh. Right.

22 Q. Okay. Only if you're detecting gas, right?

23 A. Um-hum.

24 Q. Yeah. Okay.

25 A. And we'll get calls where there's a leak in a house but the

1 Atmos guy says he's not allowed to go in the house and would we go  
2 in there and detect gas.

3 Q. Oh, okay. So other times you'll get a call from Atmos to  
4 come and you will go inside the house because they're not allowed  
5 to?

6 A. Right.

7 Q. Because? Why aren't they allowed to?

8 A. I'm not sure.

9 Q. Oh.

10 A. I don't know if it has to do with COVID or what.

11 Q. Okay. So pre-COVID, would it be the same?

12 A. I don't remember it being like that, no.

13 Q. Usually they would go in?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. Okay. So when you -- okay, so you go in with a gas detector.  
16 Okay. So if Atmos is already there, they'll call you for some  
17 assistance. But in that scenario, do you still take out your gas  
18 detector when you're on scene when Atmos is already there?

19 A. Um-hum.

20 Q. You do? Okay.

21 A. Or they'll give us theirs, you know, to go in and see if we  
22 can find anything.

23 Q. Okay. Okay, great.

24 MS. GUNARATNAM: Do you have any follow-ups?

25 BY MR. SMITH:

1 Q. Mr. Morris, you said that you all were released a quarter  
2 till 6, right, at 5:45 p.m. that evening. I'm just curious what  
3 you mean the word "released"? What do you mean by that? Who  
4 officially releases?

5 A. The sheriff's office. One of the deputies did, that I assume  
6 was in charge. His name is Fontana. And he said, okay, you guys  
7 are cleared to go.

8 Q. So at that time they still had control of the scene?

9 A. Oh, yeah.

10 Q. Then they released it -- they released you guys to go?

11 A. Right.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. And then they called us back about 8:15, they wanted some  
14 scene lights, some kind of scanner they were going to use. But  
15 when we got there, they said the humidity was too high and it  
16 fogged up, so, you know, they didn't need me after all. So --

17 Q. Scene lights, just meaning lights to light --

18 A. Yeah, from the --

19 Q. -- light the area up?

20 A. Right.

21 MR. SMITH: Okay. Thanks. That's the only question I have.

22 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay.

23 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

24 Q. Is this -- so this is the whole report?

25 A. Yes, ma'am.

1 Q. Yeah. Do you have any photos?

2 A. No.

3 Q. No photos. Okay. Do you guys take photos?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Do you guys have arson investigators on staff?

6 A. No. We use the county fire marshal for that.

7 Q. Okay. Okay. So I think we're going to wrap this up. Do you  
8 want to tell us anything that we may have not asked you about or  
9 any observations --

10 A. No.

11 Q. -- we should know about?

12 A. That's pretty much it. I mean, I was somewhat limited in my  
13 duties there, but -- I think we're good.

14 Q. Okay. Okay, great.

15 MS. GUNARATNAM: So you're good?

16 MR. SMITH: Yes, ma'am.

17 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. All right. So we'll go ahead and end  
18 the interview.

19 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)  
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  
                                  DURING ROUTINE MAINTENANCE,  
                                  FARMERSVILLE, TEXAS  
                                  ON JUNE 28, 2021  
                                  Interview of Kim Morris

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.

  
K. Morris  
Transcriber