

Date: 8/2/2023

To: RM Palmer Employees

Through: Aidan Carickhoff, Esq.
Saltz Mongeluzzi & Bendesky

From: Rachael Gunaratnam, Sr. Hazardous Materials Accident Investigator
NTSB

Subject: Interrogatory Request for the NTSB Investigation into the Natural Gas Explosion at RM Palmer Company on March 24, 2023 (PLD23LR002)

The NTSB is an independent federal agency that investigate accidents that occur in different modes of transportation and develops safety recommendations to help prevent similar events in the future. Your insight into the natural gas explosion at the RM Palmer Co. building that occurred on March 24, 2023, provides critical information in understanding the circumstances of the event. **Please provide a response to the following questions by August 10, 2023.** If you are unable to answer the question, please state, "No answer." Thank you for your feedback.

1) Please list your name and job title.

My name is Amanda Santana. My job title is packer at RM Palmer.

2) What are your responsibilities?

My responsibilities were to pack chocolate bunnies in boxes.

3) What shift in which RM Palmer Co. building (Building #1 or Building #2) did you work on March 24, 2023?¹

I worked 2 Shift in Building #1, Yes I was working on March 24, 2023.

4) Where were you at the time of the explosion? Please be as specific as possible.

In the building on the third floor next to the bolus machine.

¹ Building #1 is 77 South Second Avenue; Building #2 is 17 South Second Avenue (exploded building).

5) Did you smell gas before the explosion occurred? If so, at what time? Where were you?

Yes a few minutes before the explosion on the third floor next to the bolus machine.

6) If you did smell gas, did you report it? What time? To whom?

Yes, to Jose the mechanic at about 4:56 pm.

7) If you reported it, how did the person respond?

He said he did not smell the gas because he had two face masks on.

8) Did you evacuate prior to the explosion?

a. If so, did someone direct you to, or did you make the decision to on your own?

No.

9) If you smelled gas and did not evacuate, please explain your decision.

I did not evacuate because Palmer did not authorize it and I didn't want to lose my job.

10) Did you feel empowered to self-evacuate?

No.

11) If you ever had a problem or complaint at work, who would you report it to?

The shift lead.

12) Did you ever receive training on natural gas from RM Palmer? Please describe this training and when training was conducted to the best of your recollection.

No.

13) Is there any other information that you would like to provide to the NTSB that was not asked?

Yes, after that day, I am not the same. I have traumas, I cannot sleep, I have anxiety attacks, I have lost my co-workers. It was unfair because what happened could have been avoided.

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1) Please list your name and job title.

My name is Ana Baez. My job title is packer at RM Palmer.

2) What are your responsibilities?

My responsibilities were to pack chocolate bunnies in boxes.

3) What shift in which RM Palmer Co. building (Building #1 or Building #2) did you work on March 24, 2023?¹

I worked 2 Shift in Building #1, Yes I was working on March 24, 2023.

4) Where were you at the time of the explosion? Please be as specific as possible.

I was on the 4th floor of Building 1 on the production floor operating the coins machine.

¹ Building #1 is 77 South Second Avenue; Building #2 is 17 South Second Avenue (exploded building).

5) Did you smell gas before the explosion occurred? If so, at what time? Where were you?

Yes around 2:58 pm and around 4:00 pm on the fourth and third floors.

6) If you did smell gas, did you report it? What time? To whom?

Yes, to my supervisor Donna Newman at around 4:20 pm.

7) If you reported it, how did the person respond?

She replied with "okay".

8) Did you evacuate prior to the explosion?

a. If so, did someone direct you to, or did you make the decision to on your own?

No.

9) If you smelled gas and did not evacuate, please explain your decision.

I did not evacuate because Palmer has very strict rules and if we were to abandon our work they usually fire people for that or assess us points.

10) Did you feel empowered to self-evacuate?

No.

11) If you ever had a problem or complaint at work, who would you report it to?

I would report it to my supervisor Donna Newman.

12) Did you ever receive training on natural gas from RM Palmer? Please describe this training and when training was conducted to the best of your recollection.

No.

13) Is there any other information that you would like to provide to the NTSB that was not asked?

The only thing I would say is that the company was always negligent and always cared more about production, they never cared for their employees.

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1) Please list your name and job title.

My name is Christian Ceballos. My job title is kitchen attendant.

2) What are your responsibilities?

My responsibilities are to make sure the tanks of chocolate are full and that the demolding line on the 3rd floor has flowing chocolate going towards them.

3) What shift in which RM Palmer Co. building (Building #1 or Building #2) did you work on March 24, 2023?¹

I worked 2 Shift in Building #1, Yes I was working on March 24, 2023.

4) Where were you at the time of the explosion? Please be as specific as possible.

In the building on the third floor relieving people for break.

¹ Building #1 is 77 South Second Avenue; Building #2 is 17 South Second Avenue (exploded building).

5) Did you smell gas before the explosion occurred? If so, at what time? Where were you?

Yes.

6) If you did smell gas, did you report it? What time? To whom?

Yes, we all reported it to our supervisor Donna Newman.

7) If you reported it, how did the person respond?

She said "if anyone would like to leave they can."

8) Did you evacuate prior to the explosion?

a. If so, did someone direct you to, or did you make the decision to on your own?

No.

9) If you smelled gas and did not evacuate, please explain your decision.

I did not evacuate because Palmer because of strict rules and policies they have and the fear that if I had left I would get fired.

10) Did you feel empowered to self-evacuate?

No.

11) If you ever had a problem or complaint at work, who would you report it to?

My supervisor Donna Newman or our plant manager Sue Halvonik.

12) Did you ever receive training on natural gas from RM Palmer? Please describe this training and when training was conducted to the best of your recollection.

No.

13) Is there any other information that you would like to provide to the NTSB that was not asked?

The company was harsh on us. They treated us like robots and always wanted more out of us than we were capable of.

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1) Please list your name and job title.

My name is Maribely Marmolejos Urena. My job title is packer at RM Palmer.

2) What are your responsibilities?

My responsibilities were to pack chocolate bunnies in boxes.

3) What shift in which RM Palmer Co. building (Building #1 or Building #2) did you work on March 24, 2023?¹

I worked 2 Shift in Building #1, Yes I was working on March 24, 2023.

4) Where were you at the time of the explosion? Please be as specific as possible.

I was on the 4th floor of Building 1 in the lunch room.

¹ Building #1 is 77 South Second Avenue; Building #2 is 17 South Second Avenue (exploded building).

5) Did you smell gas before the explosion occurred? If so, at what time? Where were you?

No.

6) If you did smell gas, did you report it? What time? To whom?

N/A

7) If you reported it, how did the person respond?

N/A

8) Did you evacuate prior to the explosion?

a. If so, did someone direct you to, or did you make the decision to on your own?

No I did not evacuate prior to the explosion because my manager said that she didn't care about the smell of gas and that we had to continue to working.

9) If you smelled gas and did not evacuate, please explain your decision.

N/A

10) Did you feel empowered to self-evacuate?

Yes.

11) If you ever had a problem or complaint at work, who would you report it to?

I would report it to my supervisor.

12) Did you ever receive training on natural gas from RM Palmer? Please describe this training and when training was conducted to the best of your recollection.

No.

13) Is there any other information that you would like to provide to the NTSB that was not asked?

No.

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1) Please list your name and job title.

My name is Victor Ramon Zarzuela Ovalle. My job title is packer at RM Palmer.

2) What are your responsibilities?

My responsibilities were to pack chocolate bunnies in boxes.

3) What shift in which RM Palmer Co. building (Building #1 or Building #2) did you work on March 24, 2023?¹

I worked 2 Shift in Building #1, Yes I was working on March 24, 2023.

4) Where were you at the time of the explosion? Please be as specific as possible.

I was on the 4th floor of Building 1 in the lunch room.

¹ Building #1 is 77 South Second Avenue; Building #2 is 17 South Second Avenue (exploded building).

5) Did you smell gas before the explosion occurred? If so, at what time? Where were you?

Yes I did smell gas before the explosion, it was in the third floor on my way to break around 4:40 PM.

6) If you did smell gas, did you report it? What time? To whom?

Yes I reported it to my supervisor at around 4:42 at the 4th floor lunchroom.

7) If you reported it, how did the person respond?

She replied with "okay" and out loud said "if anyone wants to go home early they can leave."

8) Did you evacuate prior to the explosion?

a. If so, did someone direct you to, or did you make the decision to on your own?

No I did not evacuate prior to the explosion.

9) If you smelled gas and did not evacuate, please explain your decision.

No one told me to evacuate. I did not evacuate because Palmer has very strict rules and if we were to abandon our work they usually fire people for that.

10) Did you feel empowered to self-evacuate?

I did not feel empowered to self-evacuate.

11) If you ever had a problem or complaint at work, who would you report it to?

I would report it to my supervisor Donna Newman.

12) Did you ever receive training on natural gas from RM Palmer? Please describe this training and when training was conducted to the best of your recollection.

No I never received training on natural gas from RM Palmer.

13) Is there any other information that you would like to provide to the NTSB that was not asked?

The only thing I would say is that the company was always negligent and treated us horribly.