



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Office of Railroad, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Investigations

February 2, 2022

Wesley Matthews
Accident Investigator
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety
Administration
3700 S. MacArthur Blvd., Suite B
Oklahoma City, OK 73179

Kevin Colteryahn
Pipeline Safety Inspector
Railroad Commission of Texas
401 W. 13th Street, Suite B
Fort Worth, TX 76102

Mitchell Selman
Assistant Chief Deputy
Collin County Sheriff's Office
4300 Community Avenue
McKinney, TX 75071

Michael Dempster
Engineering – Valves & Process Systems
Cameron, a Schlumberger company
3600 Briarpark Drive
Houston, TX 77042

John McDill
Senior Vice President Utility Operations
Atmos Energy Corporation
5430 LBJ Freeway, Suite 1800
Dallas, TX 75240

James Dortch
Health, Safety, and Environmental Specialist
FESCO, Ltd
1000 FESCO Avenue
Alice, TX 78332

Glen Carter
Operations
Bobcat Contracting LLC
PO Box 663
1721 HCR 3106
Hillsboro, TX 76645

Re: Natural Gas-Fueled Explosion During Routine Maintenance
Farmersville, TX
June 28, 2021
NTSB #PLD21FR002

Dear NTSB Farmersville, Texas Investigative Party Coordinators:

The Technical Review Meeting for the subject investigation was held on February 1, 2022 by video conference. At that time, we reviewed all factual party comments on the draft factual reports and decided on a disposition for each one, as summarized below.

Accident Summary

Clarify the basis for indicating that natural gas concentration was about 100% once the launcher was depressurized and before the launcher door was opened. For context, add supporting evidence substantiating the fact that the mainline valve was leaking prior to the explosion.

Pipeline Operations Factual Report

Section H.4, replace the statement regarding risk evaluations with a quote that provides additional information.

Section I.1, one Party Coordinator indicated his understanding that some workers were wearing personal gas monitors on the day and site of the accident. No such devices were found on-scene by the NTSB investigative team following the explosion. After the Technical Review Meeting, the NTSB reviewed witness testimony, reviewed dashcam video footage, and reached out to the Collin County Sheriff's Office to determine if their staff saw any evidence that personal gas monitors were present after the explosion. The additional review of witness testimony confirmed that all five surviving workers indicated that they did not monitor for gas. The dashcam video shows all five surviving workers exiting the scene, but no personal gas monitors are visible.¹ The Collin County Sheriff's Office Criminal Investigation Division responded indicating that they did not recall seeing a personal gas monitor on-scene and that such devices were not in their on-scene photographs of the deceased victims. As a result, no changes were made.

Section N.1, indicate that some operator qualifications were required for the work being performed at the time of the accident.

Section P.1, add sections summarizing post-accident actions taken by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Railroad Commission of Texas. Update the summary of Atmos's post-accident actions to reflect recently provided information, including draft pigging and management of change procedures.

Human Performance Factual Report

Section C.2, clarify that Atmos approves the operator qualification required training materials, not all training materials.

Section D, indicate the approximate arrival time of Bobcat and Atmos employees, as derived from interviews. Clarify the sequence of events leading up to the accident and add references for those times that are known with certainty.

¹ Due to his injuries, the FESCO Pipeline Technician was carried out on a stretcher and was partially obscured in the video.

Section D.1, because there was not a consensus definition of “safety briefing” among Technical Review Meeting participants, clarify that a “formal safety briefing” was not held on the day of the accident and add quotes from witness testimony regarding what was discussed.

Emergency Response Factual Report

Section E, state that the fire chief reported that Atmos would do annual training with the fire department about natural gas leaks.

Section F.2.1, correct Operations and Maintenance manual date and summarize Atmos’s annual outreach to local emergency response authorities in Collin County.

Materials Laboratory Factual Reports

Report 21-093: Correct terminology to indicate that lubricant was evident, not sealant.

Report 21-094: Delete the reference to an external body relief valve because it was not present on the mainline valve.

Report 21-097: No comments were raised

Report 21-098: Expand list of safety issues identified in Appendix R of the Atmos Energy pipeline integrity management plan. Update Table 1 to clarify that the launcher door was closed during the simulation. Explain in the text that the model treats the inserted pig as a complete blockage, but the physical configuration may allow a limited amount of gas to bypass the pig.

No comments were raised regarding the Mobile Phone Records Factual Report or the Meteorology Factual Report.

All editorial suggestions have been considered and will be incorporated as appropriate.

I encourage each of you to provide a party submission pursuant to 49 CFR 831.14. If you choose to provide a party submission, it must be in a single file that is suitable for public release by the NTSB at a future date. All party submissions must be held in confidence until they are released by the NTSB. The deadline for providing party submissions is March 18, 2022. Electronic transmission is preferred.

Sincerely,

Sara Lyons
Investigator-in-Charge