

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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NATURAL GAS DISTRIBUTION PIPELINE

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LEAK AND MULTISTORY STRUCTURE

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EXPLOSION IN HARLEM, NEW YORK

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MARCH 12, 2014

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Interview of: DOMENIC SANTONASTASO

New York, New York

Wednesday,
August 6, 2014

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: RAVI CHHATRE
Accident Investigator

APPEARANCES:

RAVI CHHATRE, Investigator-in-Charge
National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, D.C.

KALU KELLY EMEABA, Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

MATTHEW NICHOLSON, Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

FRANK McCARTON, Deputy Commissioner
Office of Emergency Management
New York, New York
(Party Representative)

ANASTASIOS GEORGELIS, Director of Field Operations
Bureau of Water and Sewer Operations
Department of Environmental Protection
New York, New York

LEONARD SINGH, Chief Engineer
Gas Distribution Services
Con Edison
(Party Representative)

CHRIS STOLICKY, Utility Supervisor (Safety)
New York State Department of Public Service
(Party Representative)

BELINA ANDERSON
(Representative on behalf of Mr. Santonastaso)

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Please state for the record your full name, spelling of your name, organization you work for, and your title, business contact information such as mailing address, and who you are

1 choosing to be present with you during your interview.

2 MR. SANTONASTASO: Okay. My name is Domenic
3 Santonastaso. Spelling is Santonastaso S-a-n-t-o-n-a-s-t-a-s-o.
4 I work for the New York City Department of Environmental
5 Protection. My address is [REDACTED]
6 [REDACTED]. And I chose to come by myself.

7 MR. GEORGELIS: Domenic?

8 MR. SANTONASTASO: Yes, sir?

9 MR. GEORGELIS: That's your home address?

10 MR. SANTONASTASO: Yes.

11 MR. CHHATRE: No. No.

12 MR. SANTONASTASO: Oh, you wanted my -- I'm sorry.

13 MR. GEORGELIS: We don't want anything personal.

14 MR. SANTONASTASO: Okay. I'm sorry.

15 MR. GEORGELIS: We don't need that.

16 MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

17 MR. GEORGELIS: So you could just give them
18 your --

19 MR. SANTONASTASO: 420 East 38th Street New York, New
20 York 10016.

21 MR. CHHATRE: I would like to go around the room and
22 have each person introduce themselves. Please state your name,
23 the spelling of your name, your title, and organization that you
24 represent, and your business contact information. We'll start
25 from my right.

1 MR. NICHOLSON: Matthew Nicholson NTSB investigator.

2 Spelled M-a-t-t-h-e-w, N-i-c-h-o-l-s-o-n. Email:

3 [REDACTED]

4 MR. EMEABA: Kalu Kelly Emeaba; K-a-l-u, K-e-l-l-y, E-m-
5 e-a-b-a. I'm an NTSB investigator. My e-mail address:

6 [REDACTED]

7 MR. MCCARTON: My name's Frank McCarton spelled M-c-c-a-
8 r-t-o-n. I'm Deputy Commissioner for Operations in the Office of
9 Emergency Management in the City of New York. I am the NTSB party
10 member for the City on this investigation.

11 MR. GEORGELIS: Anastasios Georgelis; A-n-a-s-t-a-s-i-o-
12 s G-e-o-r-g-e-l-i-s. I'm here with Frank. I'm with the New York
13 City Department of Environmental Protection. My title is Director
14 of Field Operations for water and sewer operations. My e-mail
15 address is [REDACTED]

16 MS. BELINA ANDERSON: My name is Belina Anderson.
17 Spelled B-e-l-i-n-a, Anderson with an O. And I'm assistant
18 Counsel in the Bureau of Legal Affairs for the New York City
19 Department of Environmental Protection. And my e-mail address is:

20 [REDACTED]

21 MR. SINGH: Leonard Singh -- L-e-o-n-a-r-d, S-i-n-g-h --
22 Chief Engineer of Gas Distribution Services Con Edison; NTSB party
23 rep representing Con Edison on this case. It's [REDACTED].

24

25 MR. STOLICKY: Chris Stolicky. S-t-o-l-i-c-k-y. I'm

1 the New York State party rep. I'm Utility Supervisor of Safety
2 with the New York State Department of Public Service. Email
3 address is: [REDACTED]

4 MR. NICHOLSON: You know, before we go much further, I
5 think we should establish -- Belina you're here as representation
6 for Domenic, or not?

7 MS. ANDERSON: He chose not to have somebody.

8 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

9 MS. ANDERSON: But I'm here technically representing the
10 agency.

11 MR. CHHATRE: We can't allow that. I thought Domenic
12 was requesting you. Thanks for pointing it out.

13 MS. ANDERSON: Okay. So he'll --

14 MR. SANTONASTASO: I definitely requested her, hmm,
15 yeah.

16 MS. ANDERSON: Okay. I think he was thinking if he
17 needed separate counsel.

18 MR. SANTONASTASO: I -- right.

19 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. And that's what I want to clarify
20 here.

21 MS. ANDERSON: Yeah. Sure. Okay. Fine.

22 MR. NICHOLSON: So we're all on the same page.

23 MS. ANDERSON: I'm here because he wanted someone in the
24 room.

25 MR. SANTONASTASO: Yes.

1 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.

2 MR. SANTONASTASO: That's you.

3 MS. ANDERSON: Okay.

4 BY MR. CHHATRE:

5 Q. Domenic, please, for the record state your formal and
6 informal education. Any training, how long you have been with the
7 company, your title.

8 A. Sure. I'm a construction laborer. I've been here 17
9 years. My start date was July 20, 1998, so 16 years of training.
10 I graduated high school and I have about a year of college.

11 Q. Okay. And what is your job title?

12 A. Construction laborer.

13 Q. Okay. And what are your responsibilities with
14 construction labor?

15 A. I have various duties. We maintain the hydrants, make
16 sure they function correctly. Water mains and things like that.
17 I used to be in repairs where we fixed things, fixed the hydrants,
18 fixed the water mains.

19 Q. What do you mean by you fixed the hydrants and water
20 mains?

21 A. Now I'm in maintenance, so I go by and we make sure
22 they're okay. If not, I put in a ticket to send it to repairs to
23 be fixed.

24 Q. And how do you know the water main is okay or not okay?
25 You said the --

1 A. Hydrants, I said.

2 Q. Hydrants.

3 A. Hydrants, not the water main.

4 Q. What about the water main? What do you do with the
5 water main?

6 A. Well, the water main, if we get calls, but we've also
7 been scanning them lately to make sure -- see if you find that,
8 and if you see any noise or you hear any noise, then we go back at
9 a later date. Say we go there, we hear noise, we go back at a
10 later date, and they go over and check to see if there was a leak
11 or just a different kind of noise.

12 Q. Now, you said if there's a noise, how do you know if you
13 hear a noise in the water main?

14 A. We have a special machine, a special machine that we
15 carry with us.

16 Q. And how do you check that? How do you check for the
17 noise?

18 A. Well, we have three guys. One guy backs us up, one guy
19 probes. We get down to the water main, the water valve, and the
20 next guy has a machine and you put it on top of the probing and
21 see if you hear noise.

22 Q. Okay. So you need three people, a crew, to do that?

23 A. Yes. You need -- well, you have to be backed up,
24 absolutely. And one guy probes, and one guy listens.

25 Q. Okay. At minimum, you need two.

1 A. Definitely, I would say three because you have to be
2 backed up. Safety is first.

3 Q. Okay. And what instrument do you use for that?

4 A. I don't know exactly what it's called. It's a listening
5 device. I don't know exactly what it's called.

6 Q. And do you record that?

7 A. No. It's not recorded, it's just --

8 Q. Okay. So how do you know what the good pipeline sounds
9 like and what a leak sounds like?

10 A. You listen to that. It's training. It's an ear for it.
11 You go over, and there's a different noise to everything.

12 Q. Okay. And how did you get trained on this work? And
13 what is the different noise to -- how do you know what means a
14 leak?

15 A. Well, I just started this so I'm very new in this. I'm
16 4 or 5 months, 6 months into this. I have -- so I'm not really a
17 -- I'm more of the prober.

18 Q. Meaning?

19 A. Meaning I'm more of the prober guy, I'm not really the
20 listener guy.

21 Q. Okay. So you just --

22 A. Yes. I'm just, yeah.

23 Q. All you do is go on the -- do you ever touch the
24 pipeline for that?

25 A. I touch the valve or the water main, yes, inside the

1 manhole.

2 Q. Okay. I'm not sure I understand.

3 A. Okay. The manhole has four holes in it.

4 Q. Right.

5 A. One guy is backing us up making sure we don't get
6 killed, obviously. I have a probe, a bar, a T-bar. I go, I get
7 down onto the main or the actual nut, which is connected to the
8 main.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. I put it on. The guy comes with the listening device
11 and listens.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. If there's a noise, we jot down the location. If
14 there's no noise, we keep on going to the next corner.

15 Q. So it's only on manhole to manhole.

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. That's how you do it.

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. And with one manhole, how much area do you cover?

20 A. It depends. Every night is different. There's no set.
21 One night it could be 40 blocks, one night could be 10 blocks.
22 There are map sizes.

23 Q. Okay. Now, when you have your probe now touching the
24 pipe --

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. -- in one manhole, how much area of a pipe are you
2 checking?

3 A. Oh. I don't know. I just don't know. That's way too
4 technical for me.

5 Q. Okay. And so you had to go from --

6 A. I wouldn't say far, but I wouldn't know.

7 Q. So you go one manhole to another manhole for that? Is
8 it possible that there may be an area between the two manholes
9 that you are not listening to?

10 A. I don't know.

11 Q. So who would know that? The person who listens?

12 A. A person with more experience.

13 Q. Okay. So did you work on Park Avenue water main?

14 A. I don't recall, but I was told I was there, yes.

15 Q. Okay. So you don't recall you were at Park Avenue?

16 A. No. We do three or four a week of these. I don't -- I
17 mean it was 6 months ago, so I definitely don't recall actually
18 being on Park Avenue.

19 Q. Okay. Had you been on the job -- as you said, you were
20 new on doing this noise.

21 A. Scanning.

22 Q. Scanning.

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. How long you had been doing this? Six months?

25 A. We've only been doing it maybe 8 months to a year, me

1 personally.

2 Q. Okay. And before that, what did you do?

3 A. Well, that's -- I do everything I named.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. One night this, one night that, one night -- it's --

6 Q. I understand.

7 A. I don't do anything every day.

8 Q. So during your 8 months doing this --

9 A. Right.

10 Q. -- leak detection, I can call that, have you ever heard
11 any -- have you been to anyplace where actually there was a leak
12 that the person found and said, "Hey, you know, this is," --

13 A. Yeah. We found a couple. Sure.

14 Q. Okay. And do you know where those were?

15 A. No. No.

16 Q. That's all I have. Thank you so much.

17 A. Thank you, sir.

18 MR. CHHATRE: Kelly?

19 BY MR. EMEABA:

20 Q. Really, he has covered most of the questions because I
21 was interested to see what areas of the noise that it would cover.
22 For you already stated clearly that you are not the one who does
23 the listening, so you will not be able to help at this instance.
24 So who else do you know that can actually -- among you, that does
25 the listening and who can actually tell us more about it?

1 A. Well, we have our supervisor coming in later.

2 Q. Okay. What was the person's name?

3 A. Mr. John Lobello.

4 Q. Mr. John what?

5 A. Lobello. L-o-b-e-l-l-o.

6 Q. L-o-b-e-l-l-o.

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Okay. So he is the one that does this?

9 A. Well, he's been doing it for 20 or 30 years.

10 Q. Okay. Then you are following him, or following the crew

11 doing this work, in as much as you did the probing.

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Or you do the probing after this time.

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. At the end of the listening or scanning by your

16 supervisor --

17 A. Right.

18 Q. -- or any other person, did they to relay to you their

19 observation, or try to tell you what they observed? Can you tell

20 us more what you were taught?

21 A. Yes. If there is a noise, I definitely want to know so

22 I can listen for the next time. So we do, you know, -- say that

23 we go to one I probe and there is a noise there. We'll pass it

24 around. We all want to listen to see what the noise sounds like.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. So, you know, just for experience as we go on. Like I
2 said, we're just fairly new in it. We were given this -- leak
3 detection came to our yard fairly -- very recently.

4 Q. About how long ago?

5 A. I don't recall when they closed down their shop, but not
6 too long ago. A couple of years, but the scanning is pretty new
7 for me.

8 Q. Less than 5 years?

9 A. Yes. Definitely for me. Definitely for me.

10 Q. Okay. And have you had a situation that your crew went,
11 did the probing, did the scanning, and you listened to it, and at
12 the end of the day they found out it was not actually a water main
13 leak?

14 A. Plenty of times.

15 Q. Have you found that?

16 A. Plenty of times.

17 Q. Previously you thought it was a water main leak?

18 A. We thought there was a noise.

19 Q. It was a noise.

20 A. You know, you can never be 100% that it's going to be --
21 if you listen it's going to be -- you go with the noise. If it's
22 a good enough noise, another crew will go back with more -- better
23 equipment. And they'll go back and scan it again, if you give
24 them that location that you heard a noise there.

25 Q. Okay. Do you know what the first equipment crew is

1 called? The name of the stronger one you could use for that?

2 A. I don't. I'm sorry. I'm not your guy. I'm not
3 technical like that. I don't know what it's called, to be honest
4 with you.

5 Q. Okay. And the one your crew actually narrowed down to,
6 you know, based on the noise --

7 A. Right.

8 Q. -- it was concluded to be a leak, and you dug up. And
9 when you dig up, what do you normally see?

10 A. When we dig open?

11 Q. Yes.

12 A. Right now, I'm not in the digging department.

13 Q. Oh. You're not in the digging department.

14 A. I'm an investigator right now.

15 Q. So after you finish, your crew investigates it and you
16 believe there's a noise there. From what you've just said --

17 A. Correct.

18 Q. -- you sent out that crew --

19 A. We give it to another crew, correct.

20 Q. Okay. They come out to do the second check.

21 A. Correct.

22 Q. Okay. And that crew then comes to do the digging.

23 A. Right.

24 Q. So the second crew comes in. What do you expect from
25 them?

1 A. Well, if they verify it's a leak, then it goes to
2 repairs. If they verify it's a leak.

3 Q. Okay. So you need the second determination?

4 A. Oh, definitely. 100%. We don't go by the first. The
5 first determination is just to see if there's a noise there.
6 That's it.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. If we have a noise, we write down the location. We give
9 it to Mr. Lobello, who is coming in later, and he goes back the
10 second time and verifies it.

11 Q. Okay. Have you had a situation, within the time you
12 were there, that your crew goes in to do scanning and you don't
13 think it was a leak because the sound was not very clear or -- or
14 you concluded there was none, and later on a different crew goes
15 for scanning, and they also find a leak in that same area?

16 A. You know what? When I was there, 10 minutes later it
17 could be different. There could be a leak there 10 minutes later.
18 Do you understand what I'm saying? If I go there and there's
19 nothing, 10 minutes later there could be something. Water, (snaps
20 fingers) that quick. So I can't say. I can't answer you 100%
21 with that one because an hour later something could happen.

22 Q. Okay. You are scanning or you are probing, are there
23 planned maintenance or planned check, or are they just something
24 that you do a pick up. Once in a while you go out?

25 A. No. We have maps.

1 Q. You have maps.

2 A. Maps.

3 Q. Okay. So, if you have maps, are they on that schedules?
4 In terms of is it a one year schedule, or a 6-month schedule, you
5 guys go out --

6 A. You're better off asking Mr. Lobello. He runs the
7 department. He runs that department, leak detection, for us.

8 Q. Okay. Thank you.

9 A. You're welcome.

10 BY MR. STOLICKY:

11 Q. Hi. This is Chris Stolickey. In your experience out
12 there using these listening devices, how small of a leak have you
13 seen that they pick up? And has it been dependent on distance?
14 Meaning a full block or 100 feet? This is based on what you've
15 seen.

16 A. Well, I mean, I wouldn't know how exactly small.

17 Q. I mean, do you see it dripping once you excavate it, or
18 is it spreading out?

19 A. I mean, like I said, you listen for a noise. And you
20 just want to get it to the next guy, if you hear a noise. And the
21 next guy really makes the determination. He has like 30 years'
22 experience, the whole bit, and the more technical equipment. So
23 he really makes that determination, and he's very good, Mr.
24 Lobello. So, what he can pick up, maybe an average guy don't pick
25 up. He has a trained ear, I mean, it's 30 years. 30 years.

1 Q. So, even if it's you or anyone else who was listening to
2 the device, based on what you've seen when they've excavated to
3 find a leak --

4 A. Right.

5 Q. -- what've you seen as far as just -- describe the size
6 of the leak.

7 A. Everyone's different. Everyone's different. There's,
8 you know, it depends on what size main also.

9 Q. I see.

10 A. There's 12 inch, you have a 6 inch main, you have an 8
11 inch main. I mean, I've had mostly 12 and 20's. You know, I've
12 seen some good leaks and I've seen some little squirts, honestly.
13 There's no two same leaks. I promise you.

14 Q. And do leaks occur always at joints, or is it the -- by
15 itself?

16 A. Well, a joint will be a joint leak and then there's
17 circulars, and there's longitudinals, which is a break also.

18 Q. But it finds all types of leaks?

19 A. All types of leaks.

20 Q. Okay. Thanks.

21 MR. CHHATRE: Lenny?

22 BY MR. SINGH:

23 Q. I have a quick couple of questions. Domenic, good
24 morning, first of all.

25 A. Good morning, sir. How are you?

1 Q. Lenny Singh with Con Edison. So, 17 years you've been
2 in the company.

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. You're in a new group now learning this technique?

5 A. Not in a new group. We do it every now and then, yes.

6 Q. I mean a new function.

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. You're learning a new --

9 A. Learning something new, correct.

10 Q. You're a prober and I guess you work your way up to a
11 listener, or whatever they call it. Any training curriculum that
12 gets you to be a listener?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Other than on the job training and experience?

15 A. Yeah. I had no training. It's just doing it. That's
16 it. Repetitive.

17 Q. Getting a feel for it, basically.

18 A. That's it.

19 Q. Any requirement to have your hearing checked on some
20 periodic basis?

21 A. We definitely. The truck's coming next week.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. So once a year for sure.

24 Q. And once a year you get your hearing checked?

25 A. Definitely. 100%.

1 Q. Okay. The listening device, I guess the training is on
2 the job with the device? There is no classroom training or
3 procedure?

4 A. Not yet, but I'm sure they're going to come up with
5 something. Not as yet.

6 Q. Okay. Is there a procedure that they give you that
7 says, these are the things you look for and check? A one page, or
8 a two page, or multipages?

9 A. No, but, I mean, like me personally. I can speak for
10 myself, I've gone out with two very experienced guys and you learn
11 from them. That's my training. It's on the job.

12 Q. Okay. Is going from a prober to a listener a
13 promotional opportunity?

14 A. Nah.

15 Q. It's the same title?

16 A. Yeah. Same.

17 Q. Same title? Okay. That's all I have, Ravi.

18 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Thanks. Frank?

19 MR. MCCARTON: I don't have any questions.

20 BY MR. GEORGELIS:

21 Q. Mr. Domenic?

22 A. Yes, sir?

23 Q. So you mentioned that when you listen with the device
24 for noise it will pick up leaks on the water main. Have you ever
25 picked up leaks that are on the services?

1 A. You know, it's a good question. You know, that's a good
2 one. I don't know 100% because I don't go back with the second
3 crew. So once we put it in, you know, I really kind of lose touch
4 a bit. You know, it goes from one crew to another, and then it
5 goes to repair. But I'm sure -- I think it's definitely sensitive
6 enough.

7 MR. GEORGELIS: That's all I have.

8 MR. SINGH: Can I piggyback on that question?

9 MR. CHHATRE: Sure.

10 BY MR. SINGH:

11 Q. So how do you sound -- do you say you take a device from
12 the truck and you sound a valve -- off the valve. You can
13 probably do the same on a hydrant?

14 A. Yes. Absolutely.

15 Q. Does that machine go into the building to sound off the
16 service?

17 A. You know what, I do remember this. Actually, you don't
18 even need to -- it's such a sensitive machine that once you're on
19 the main, it would tell you if there's hydrants leaking or
20 services leaking. I actually do remember that now.

21 Q. Besides the machine, do we still use that little airfoil
22 thing --

23 A. Yeah. Of course. That was what I did daily. As an
24 investigator, we go out, we listen. Somebody calls us for the
25 leak, we listen with our trained ear. But now they've come out

1 with, you know --

2 Q. Ultrasonic devices?

3 A. Right. Which, obviously, is a little bit more
4 technical.

5 MR. CHHATRE: Matt?

6 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

7 Q. Yeah. Just some follow ups. I want to be clear. I
8 understand you said you put a T-bar down the manholes? So that's
9 a metal --

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. -- piece of equipment. And that has to touch,
12 physically touch the pipe.

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Okay. And then you put on the acoustical or the --

15 A. Right.

16 Q. -- ultrasonic headphones, and you put a little
17 microphone on touching that T-bar?

18 A. Correct.

19 Q. Okay. So you're in contact with the pipe. Where the
20 water main runs, are there other services next to it? Natural
21 gas?

22 A. Not in the manholes where we're at, no.

23 Q. Not in the manholes.

24 A. No.

25 Q. So it is -- it's strictly water.

1 A. That's just us, yes. Nobody around there --

2 Q. So you don't have other noises?

3 A. No. No.

4 Q. Okay. Traffic is not an interference?

5 A. I mean, can something be underneath? Yes. But I'm

6 saying -- but right on top that's our manhole. No one's going to

7 be able to be on top of us. That's for sure.

8 Q. No one can be on top.

9 A. No. Definitely not.

10 Q. And there's no other services in that manhole?

11 A. No. I would believe not.

12 Q. Okay. Does the device -- the device is solely reliant

13 on you hearing and interpreting? There's nothing like a

14 digital --

15 A. No. Nothing.

16 Q. -- that says you're in a range of frequencies?

17 A. I think -- now, once again, I think that's why you have

18 to -- I think the second one is much more --

19 Q. Okay. Sophisticated.

20 A. Yes. 100%. Definitely.

21 Q. Okay. So, it's really just a --

22 A. Ours is relying on our ears. The second one might be

23 different. It might show you like waves, or, you know, I'm not

24 sure.

25 Q. Okay. Well, we'll ask John when he gets here.

1 A. Right.

2 Q. Then, as I understand it, when you believe you've found
3 a leak, you actually turn that in? You enter that into a system?

4 A. Well, when we hear a noise, not a leak.

5 Q. I'm sorry. You hear a noise.

6 A. Yes. When we hear a noise we give it to -- and they go
7 back and they'll check that area.

8 Q. Well, how do you give it? Is it put into a computer
9 system?

10 A. Yeah. Well, we write on our 116 and we write the exact
11 location.

12 Q. What's the 116?

13 A. 116 is our ticket we give in at the end of the night.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. What locations we were at.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. So, if we walk 10 blocks and there was nothing, no
18 noise. No noise, no noise. If there was a leak on just say,
19 where were we, Park Avenue, or whatever, and 42nd Street. Then we
20 send them to Park and 42nd with a noise.

21 Q. Send them. That's the second crew?

22 A. Send the second crew.

23 Q. To do more listening?

24 A. Correct.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. And they'll make the determination if they should go
2 further.

3 Q. But is that a computerized system?

4 A. Once again, you'll definitely get better answers from
5 Mr. Lobello.

6 Q. Well, I'm trying to figure out how the work gets to the
7 second crew. Is this a paper form, this 116?

8 A. Of course. Yes.

9 Q. Of course? Okay.

10 A. We write it down. Nothing's documented -- no. There's
11 no -- nothing retrieval in there.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. There's nothing retrieval in there. It's just a simple
14 listening device.

15 Q. And that form you give to?

16 A. Our supervisor.

17 Q. Okay. And he gets it to the second crew?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And then I heard a lot of questions about when you get
20 there and you dig it up. I didn't think you were the crew that
21 went out and dug these leaks up.

22 A. No.

23 Q. Okay. So you really don't see the leaks you had first
24 listened to.

25 A. No. I mean, I have 17 years. I have done for 11 years,

1 and the last 6 years I have been on the investigating side. So, I
2 mean, I actually know what --

3 Q. You've seen leaks.

4 A. Obviously, yeah.

5 Q. You've dug. Right. But they're not necessarily the
6 leaks you had heard.

7 A. No.

8 Q. Okay. Okay.

9 A. I'm not at step 3. I'm step 1.

10 Q. Exactly. I just wanted to clarify that.

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Okay. What's the spacing between manholes? Is that
13 different on every --

14 A. I promise you no two spaces are identical.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. That I can promise you.

17 Q. And that's all I have. Thanks.

18 BY MR. GEORGELIS:

19 Q. So Domenic, just to follow up a little bit --

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. -- with what Matt asked you. How long were you at 38th
22 street, the maintenance?

23 A. Been there 6 years.

24 Q. Okay. So during your duties, you opened and closed
25 valves?

1 A. Yes. Of course.

2 Q. For shutdowns?

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. To do that, you got to put a bar on the operating neck
5 of the valve?

6 A. To shut down?

7 Q. Yeah.

8 A. No, a gate key.

9 Q. A gate key?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. You put it on the operating --

12 A. Operating. Yes.

13 Q. Is that the same thing you touch with the T-bar?

14 A. Pretty much. I mean, that's what we touch if you -- say
15 you can't find that you can get to the pipe, but mostly you're
16 going for the operating valve -- operating nut.

17 Q. So when you're probing, you know you're on the water
18 main?

19 A. Yes, of course.

20 Q. Okay. Just to answer your --

21 A. Yes.

22 MR. NICHOLSON: Yeah. Thanks. What are the valves?
23 What type of valves are on those systems? Gate valves?

24 MR. GEORGELIS: Gate valves.

25 MR. SANTONASTASO: It's an operating nut. Yeah.

1 BY MR. GEORGELIS:

2 Q. And then when you probe, you also have the ability to go
3 from a valve to a hydrant, and not necessarily round about.

4 A. Yes. We can sound the hydrant also.

5 Q. And generally valves are, in Manhattan, on every corner?

6 A. Definitely, yes. I would say 95% on every corner there
7 is a valve.

8 Q. So generally spacing between valves is one block?

9 A. A block, but, I mean --

10 Q. It could be further.

11 A. It could be further, but there's no specific, you know,
12 there's no general.

13 Q. Yes.

14 A. You're not going to get two of the same.

15 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

16 Q. Okay. Thanks for that.

17 A. You're not going to get two of the same, right?

18 Q. And not every intersection then?

19 A. Do you want specifics? No. It's not 150 feet. Right.
20 Exactly.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm sorry. Yeah.

22 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

23 Q. We needed specifics.

24 A. It's okay.

25 Q. That's good to know. Okay. So you're almost always on

1 top of a valve then when you have the T-bar on there. That's what
2 the manholes are --

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: If the problem --

4 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

5 A. That's what the manholes for, to do the valve in the
6 manhole, right?

7 Q. Okay.

8 MR. SINGH: You have to --

9 MR. SANTONASTASO: Jackpot.

10 MR. SINGH: Clean it out. Dig it out.

11 MR. SANTONASTASO: Jackpot. Yeah.

12 MR. NICHOLSON: I'm done on the area.

13 MR. SANTONASTASO: Good.

14 BY MR. CHHATRE:

15 Q. A couple of questions for you. You said you had done a
16 lot of digging in the past before your new responsibility, right?

17 A. Correct.

18 Q. Can you describe all those leaks that you dug up? What
19 kind of leaks were those? I mean, if you have 10, describe all 10
20 to me.

21 A. I don't even know how to answer that. There's no two
22 leaks that are the same. I mean, I've done water main breaks.
23 I've done -- we've done pipe jobs, which we cut out the pipe and
24 install a length of pipe. We've put clamps on, I mean, there's no
25 two leaks that are the same also.

1 Q. I'm not saying they are the same. That's why I'm asking
2 you to describe all of them.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. I mean, have you seen cracks?

5 A. -- I mean, cracks? Of course I've seen cracks. I mean,
6 17 years on the job.

7 Q. Lengthwise or --

8 A. Yes. Both of them.

9 Q. And what are the smallest you have seen, and what are
10 the largest you have seen?

11 A. I've seen whole pipes cracked in half, and I've seen
12 little, you know, as little as this.

13 Q. Okay. And they are all cast iron pipes?

14 A. Mostly. There's a couple of other ones, but mostly cast
15 iron.

16 Q. Okay. Other ones being steel or concrete?

17 A. Yeah. I don't really get into that. Concrete? No.
18 Definitely not concrete.

19 Q. Okay. So, nobody told you that this is steel or this is
20 a cast iron. When you dug up the pipe, nobody told you that you
21 are digging up a cast iron?

22 A. No. They don't tell us before that, no. We just dig it
23 up. Whatever it may be, we do the repair. That's it.

24 Q. Now, do you see a lot of water when you dig up the pipe?

25 A. Depends what type of leak it is.

1 Q. That's what I'm asking. So describe -- I'm not asking
2 you to give me just one answer. Tell me if you see pin drop
3 leaks, if you see a huge water coming out. Just give me some feel
4 for it.

5 A. I've seen a 72 inch main where I've had water up to my
6 waist, and I've seen where I can't even get a drop of water on the
7 floor. I mean, I've seen --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. There's no exact answer to that.

10 Q. So this 72 inch main with water to your waist deep --

11 A. Right.

12 Q. You had to use an instrument to find that, or there is
13 people report that to you?

14 A. We shut the valves and then they do the job.

15 Q. I understand.

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Who reported the leak with the water waist deep for you?
18 You had to use the instrument to detect that or do --

19 A. Consumer's, whoever.

20 Q. -- people complain?

21 A. Whoever, you know, whoever called it in. There's no --
22 it could be a cop. It could be a pedestrian. It could be --

23 Q. So people call you in?

24 A. Of course.

25 Q. So the leaks that you are saying about waist deep water,

1 they are called in leaks and not you guys detecting it.

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. And the ones -- okay. Now, if you don't see any noise
4 with your team --

5 A. Can I do off the record one second?

6 MR. CHHATRE: We'll go off the record.

7 (Off the record).

8 MR. CHHATRE: Back on the record.

9 (On the record).

10 MS. ANDERSON: Can we go off the record one second more?
11 I'm sorry.

12 MR. CHHATRE: Off the record.

13 (Off the record).

14 MR. CHHATRE: Back on the record.

15 (On the record).

16 BY MR. CHHATRE:

17 Q. If your crew goes in to find the leak, and you don't see
18 anything, then the second crew doesn't go there at all. Is that
19 correct?

20 A. Do you mean when I go there and scan and I don't hear
21 anything?

22 Q. Yes.

23 A. No.

24 Q. Then the second crew --

25 A. No. They would not go there.

1 Q. Okay. And the purpose of the second crew to go in is to
2 confirm with a better technique?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Okay. And that's all I have. Thank you so much.

5 A. You're welcome, sir.

6 MR. CHHATRE: Any follow ups?

7 MR. SINGH: I have one.

8 MR. CHHATRE: Go ahead.

9 BY MR. SINGH:

10 Q. So, in your short time learning how to listen -- first
11 of all, do you primarily work in Manhattan, or do you work in all
12 the boroughs?

13 A. I work in Manhattan.

14 Q. Okay. Can you describe to me what that distinct sound
15 of a water leak sounds like?

16 A. I can't describe it, but it's a good hum. It's more of
17 a -- it's a vibration.

18 Q. Can you tell the difference?

19 A. And it turns into a noise.

20 Q. Will you be able to tell the difference between steam
21 flowing in a pipe, gas flowing, some liquid flowing, other liquid
22 flowing in a pipe, a subway, an electric hum?

23 A. Me personally? No.

24 Q. So someone has to -- I guess at some point in time, one
25 develops the skill to be able to distinguish all those sounds?

1 A. Correct.

2 Q. Do you think it would be more difficult to be able to
3 detect a water leak in Manhattan, as opposed to, let's say,
4 Queens?

5 A. Personally? I think so, but I don't know if the stats
6 showed it. That's my personal opinion.

7 Q. Okay. That's it.

8 MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

9 MR. SINGH: Thank you.

10 MR. CHHATRE: If no other questions --

11 MR. STOLICKY: One more.

12 MR. CHHATRE: Oh, you. Go ahead.

13 BY MR. STOLICKY:

14 Q. Is your experience with this audio bolt device, you're
15 watching -- just being out there around it, do you find that
16 sometimes it's difficult to get a good reading or sound on the
17 pipe? So is it -- depending on ground conditions or getting down
18 to the pipe, do you find that people have to struggle or take a --

19 A. Well, if you mean do we catch every leak? No. Oh,
20 yeah, absolutely.

21 Q. Just using the device itself. I mean, I guess my next
22 question is: do you ever get out there and some part of it's
23 broken or it doesn't work properly?

24 A. The actual machine?

25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. No. The machine's pretty good. Obviously. I've never
2 had a broken machine.

3 Q. Okay. Do you know how often it needs to recalibrated,
4 or worked on?

5 A. Oh. No. Our supervisor, when he comes here later,
6 he'll definitely know those answers.

7 Q. Okay. Thanks.

8 MR. CHHATRE: Thank you so much.

9 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

10 Q. I'm just going to follow up with a couple of things. I
11 didn't think we asked you what shift you're on.

12 A. Midnights. 12 to 8.

13 Q. 12 to 8 a.m.?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay. And just going back to, I think, the line of
16 questioning Ravi was going after. Before you were doing leak
17 detection, you said you'd done some repairs on mains.

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. You mentioned pinhole to big leaks.

20 A. Obviously.

21 Q. So, in the cases where you were sent out on a repair
22 crew -- I assume that was on a repair crew?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Okay. Did you -- when you get to water main breaks, is
25 it typical to see the water breaking through the concrete and

1 flowing up on the street level? Or do you have to dig down to
2 find them?

3 A. Honestly? Both ways.

4 Q. Both ways.

5 A. There's no, once again, you could go in and you could
6 have pocket and you see everything, or you could go there and it's
7 flowing and it's starting to break up the street.

8 Q. Okay. So if you didn't see it on the street, you dug
9 down and you saw it, what, a pocket? Can you describe --

10 A. Well, it's -- sometimes you move a rock and you'll see
11 the water, meaning, you know, it's confined. Once you move
12 something, you'll see.

13 Q. It hasn't broken through the street level.

14 A. Right. Correct.

15 Q. And you dig in and you actually have to physically
16 remove some earth, or you said a rock.

17 A. Right. Now, we have supervisors. They put down spots
18 for us, and we just dig.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. I'm a laborer. They tell me we get paid from the neck
21 down.

22 Q. No. I understand, but you've got eyes. You show up on
23 site, you know.

24 A. I get paid from the neck down.

25 Q. You don't see the water on the street in every case.

1 A. No. Not every case.

2 Q. Okay. All right. Great. Thanks.

3 MR. SANTONASTASO: Good?

4 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Thank you so much.

5 MR. SANTONASTASO: Thank you guys. I appreciate it.

6 Pleasure meeting everybody.

7 (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 DISTRIBUTION PIPELINE
 LEAK AND MULTISTORY STRUCTURE
 EXPLOSION IN HARLEM, NEW YORK
 MARCH 12, 2014
 Interview of Domenic Santonastaso

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Shannon Smearman
Transcriber