

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: JOHN VASILAK

Con Edison

4 Irving Place

New York, New York

Monday,

August 7, 2014

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: RAVI CHHATRE
Investigator-in-Charge

APPEARANCES:

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National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, D.C.

KALU KELLY EMEABA, Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

MATTHEW NICHOLSON, Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

RICHARD DOWNS, Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

FRANK McCARTON, Deputy Commissioner
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New York, New York
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ANASTASIOS GEORGELIS, Director of Field Operations
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LEONARD SINGH, Chief Engineer
Gas Distribution Services
Con Edison
(Party Representative)

CHRIS STOLICKY, Utility Supervisor (Safety)
New York State Department of Public Service
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LaASIA HUNDLEY, Quality Assurance Manager
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UWUA Local 1-2
(Representative on behalf of Mr. Vasilak)

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I N T E R V I E W

MR. CHHATRE: Good morning. Today is Thursday, August 7th, 2014. We are currently in Con Edison's facility located at 4 Irving Place, New York. We are meeting regarding the investigation of natural gas distribution pipeline link and multistory structures explosion that occurred on March 12, 2014 in Harlem, New York.

My name is Ravi Chhatre. I'm with National Transportation Safety Board located in Washington DC and I'm Investigator-in-Charge of this accident. The NTSB investigation number for this accident is DCA-14-MP-002.

I would like to start by notifying everyone present in this room that we are recording this interview and we may transcribe it at a later date. Transcripts will be provided directly to the interviewee for review in identifying any typographical errors. Transcripts may be posted in NTSB public docket.

Also, I'd like to inform Mr. John Vasilak that you are permitted to have one other person present with you during the interview. This is a person of your choice, your supervisor, friend, family member or, if you choose, no one at all.

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 have chosen to be present with you during your interview.

1 MR. VASILAK: My name is John Vasilak, V-A-S-I-L-A-K. I
2 work for Con Edison Manhattan GDS, Gas Operations. I have Bruce
3 Farina with me.

4 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. And your -- well, business contact
5 information.

6 MR. DOWNS: Business e-mail.

7 MR. VASILAK: Business e-mail, [REDACTED]

8 MR. CHHATRE: Now I'd like to go around the room and
9 have each person introduce themselves. Please state your name,
10 spelling of your name, your title and organization that you
11 represent and your business contact.

12 Starting from my right, Matt?

13 MR. NICHOLSON: Matthew Nicholson, NTSB investigator,
14 spelled M-a-t-t-h-e-w, N-i-c-h-o-l-s-o-n,

15 [REDACTED]

16 MR. DOWNS: Richard Downs, D-o-w-n-s. I'm a Survival
17 Factors Investigator, NTSB, Washington DC, [REDACTED]

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

20 [REDACTED].

21 MR. MCCARTON: Good morning. My name is Frank McCarton.
22 I'm a Deputy Commissioner in the Office of Emergency Management in
23 the City of New York. I'm the City Rep for the -- I'm the party
24 rep for the NTSB investigation. My e-mail address is

25 [REDACTED]

1 MR. FARINA: Bruce Farina, F-a-r-i-n-a, Local 1-2
2 Business Agent for Gas Operations. My e-mail address is
3 [REDACTED].

4 MR. SINGH: Leonard Singh, L-e-o-n-a-r-d, S-i-n-g-h,
5 Chief Engineer, Gas Operations, Con Edison. Also the Con Edison
6 party representative on these investigation. [REDACTED]

7 MR. STOLICKY: Chris Stolickey, S-t-o-l-i-c-k-y. I'm the
8 New York State Party Rep Utility Supervisor Safety at the New York
9 State Department of Public Service. E-mail address is
10 [REDACTED].

11 MR. CHHATRE: Thank you.

12 INTERVIEW OF JOHN VASILAK

13 BY MR. CHHATRE:

14 Q. Mr. Vasilak, for the record, can you tell us your
15 education, formal education or work related trainings and your
16 duties with Con Edison?

17 A. My education, I graduated Thomas Edison Vocational
18 Technical High School in Jamaica, New York. I finished one year
19 of Queens College out there in Queens. And I'm with the -- what
20 else do you want to know?

21 Q. Well, how long you've been with Con Edison, your --

22 A. Twenty-nine years in Con Edison.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. Approximately 25 years -- 24 years in my current
25 position.

1 Q. Okay. And with your current position as a gas mechanic
2 or --

3 A. I guess the title would be a service mechanic.

4 Q. Service Mechanic. Is it gas service mechanic or just --

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. -- just service -- gas service?

7 A. It was service mechanic. At that time, we used to do
8 troubleshooting on gas boilers. That title now is grandfathered.
9 It's -- I'm grandfathered into the title. We --

10 Q. So --

11 A. -- no longer provide service on boilers.

12 Q. Okay. So what are your responsibilities with that
13 title? What do you do?

14 A. We do all kinds of different things with the customers.
15 Primarily, we respond to gas leaks inside, outside. We do
16 commercial turn-ons. We do multiple apartment turn-ons here in
17 Manhattan, safety checks, electrical turn-ons, emergency turn-ons,
18 after hour turn-ons.

19 Q. For that, if you could tell me what that was?

20 A. Typical inspections that we do.

21 Q. What is a turn-on? What do you mean by gas or electric
22 turn-ons?

23 A. An electric turn-on, you'd be reenergizing an electric
24 meter to an apartment. Gas turn-on, you'd be testing the pipe to
25 the appliance, bringing gas to the equipment, making sure it

1 functions properly.

2 Q. And your title and responsibilities were the same at the
3 time of the accident --

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. -- on Park Avenue?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. That's all I have for now. I'll just let Rick Downs
8 take over.

9 MR. DOWNS: Thank you.

10 BY MR. DOWNS:

11 Q. Thank you for joining us today, Mr. Vasilak.
12 Twenty-nine years with the company, 24 during your current role.
13 You had specific vocational technical training to do gas and
14 electric work?

15 A. That was just high school.

16 Q. High school.

17 A. There was no training for gas work in high school.

18 Q. Is there a training program that you went through at Con
19 Ed to do your current job?

20 A. Yes. You would interview for the -- at my time, when I
21 came into the position, you'd interview for the position. If you
22 passed that, you came out here and worked in the field. You got
23 hands-on training.

24 Q. Okay. Initially, like as an apprentice working with
25 somebody else?

1 A. Right.

2 Q. Okay. At some point, it was determined you could work
3 on your own and you advanced to that position?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Roughly how long ago was that?

6 A. Twenty-three years.

7 Q. Twenty-three years ago. Okay.

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. Very good. Is there any recurrent training that you
10 have to go through, annual testing or anything like that to
11 maintain --

12 A. We get requalified.

13 Q. Re-qualified?

14 A. Yes, every 3 years.

15 Q. Every 3 years. Roughly, top of your head, I'm not
16 looking to split hairs on dates, but when was your most recent
17 recurrent training?

18 A. I don't -- over a year ago.

19 Q. A little over a year ago maybe requalified?

20 A. Yeah. Maybe a year and a half ago.

21 Q. About a year and a half? Okay. And you're current on
22 all qualifications?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Is there a license of any manner like a steamfitter or
25 something, a boiler technician license or something required by

1 the State to do what you do?

2 A. I have no knowledge of that.

3 MR. DOWNS: I'll ask your State guy. Is there a license
4 of any manner to do what he does, like a plumber's license or
5 anything like that?

6 MR. STOLICKY: I'm not familiar.

7 MR. DOWNS: We'll follow up with Con Ed later on on
8 that, how's that?

9 MR. STOLICKY: Is there a --

10 MR. DOWNS: If there's a state license or any kind of
11 licensing that's required of the field technicians?

12 MR. SINGH: Operator qualification.

13 MR. DOWNS: Just operator qualification.

14 MR. SINGH: Right.

15 MR. DOWNS: And that's an internal Con Ed process?

16 MR. SINGH: No. Operative qualification, it's a federal
17 requirement.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh yeah.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Regulatory requirement.

20 MR. DOWNS: That's a regulatory requirement?

21 MR. SINGH: Um-hum.

22 MR. CHHATRE: Requirement.

23 MR. DOWNS: And you're fully qualified in that? That's

24 a --

25 MR. STOLICKY: I guess I'm confused --

1 MR. DOWNS: -- qualification --

2 MR. STOLICKY: -- between plumbing qualifications versus
3 LQ as defined in the pipeline safety regs.

4 MR. DOWNS: And that's what we are talking about, your
5 qualification, right?

6 MR. SINGH: So you have an (indiscernible)?

7 MR. VASILAK: Yes.

8 BY MR. DOWNS:

9 Q. I may be not familiar with some of the terminology, so
10 if you could help clarify sometimes for us.

11 A. Okay.

12 Q. Thank you. And just to be clear on the record, you were
13 the individual, the service mechanic who was dispatched to the
14 particular site on that particular day, March 12; is that correct?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Okay. On the day of the event, brief description of the
17 activities immediately preceding the event; was it a routine day,
18 what other jobs did you work on that particular morning?

19 A. I don't recall the job. I just know I was up town in
20 Washington Heights, 170-something Street.

21 Q. Okay. And --

22 A. I was given the leak and responded to it.

23 Q. No unusual issues that day? You were having a normal,
24 ordinary day?

25 A. Normal day.

1 Q. No personal activities in your life, wife having a baby
2 or something like that, nothing --

3 A. No.

4 Q. -- that would distract you? Okay. So you were good to
5 go that day?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Great. Okay. Procedurally, to address a gas odor
8 report, complaint report, what would be the action routine? What
9 would you normally do to respond to the event if you got a inside
10 or an outside gas leak, step by step?

11 A. Take the job from the dispatcher and put it onto your
12 doc sheet and respond there to the leak.

13 Q. Okay. And you would basically conduct an inspection?
14 How does that work?

15 A. Upon arrival?

16 Q. Upon arrival at the site.

17 A. You go to where the call came in.

18 Q. And --

19 A. Go see the customer who called.

20 Q. You interview the customer and find out step by step
21 what their complaint was all about?

22 A. Yeah. What are they calling me about exactly?

23 Q. Okay. On the day of event, best -- to your best
24 recollection, specific step by step activities as you responded to
25 the event. You got the call from the GERC to respond to the site.

1 We do have the transcript here, okay, and you get a printout on
2 your computer screen in your truck? Is that how it works also?

3 A. I get the job.

4 Q. You get the job.

5 A. On a computer.

6 Q. On a computer and you respond to that site. Okay. And
7 you have a good knowledge of northern Manhattan, Harlem and
8 everything in terms of the street arrangements, the various parks
9 or whatever the (indiscernible) don't go through, that kind of
10 thing?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. So are you able to instantly say, oh, I need to take
13 this particular route rather --

14 A. Best route.

15 Q. -- than this particular route? Very good. Okay. And
16 on that particular day, you got the call. You were on
17 170-something Street. We do have the map from the computer system
18 from the GPS in your truck. Correct me if I'm wrong. You
19 followed over to the east side highway, is it, and followed that
20 down and exited there and proceeded directly to the site. Is that
21 correct?

22 A. Yes. The job was a Park Avenue address. There is a
23 Park Avenue exit off the highway. Can't get more direct than
24 that.

25 Q. So you went straight away. There were no interceding

1 activities? You didn't stop for anything?

2 A. For nothing.

3 Q. Our previous witness indicated, and that's Mr. Kelly,
4 John Kelly -- Jack Kelly, that for some reason, you couldn't
5 respond immediately. Is that correct when he first talked with
6 you?

7 A. I don't recall anything.

8 Q. You don't recall? Did you have any follow-up
9 discussions with him between the time between you got the initial
10 call and when you arrived at the site?

11 A. I don't believe so.

12 Q. You don't recall. Okay. That's fine. We didn't show
13 any records. I just want to double check with you. Okay. So you
14 got off the highway at the Park Avenue exit and you're following
15 Park Avenue South; is that correct?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. And the overhead, you've got the railroad overhead
18 there?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Okay. How far down on Park Avenue roughly did you get
21 before you sensed that you were -- there was something going on up
22 ahead?

23 A. Some guy from Con Ed came to the side of my truck,
24 banging on the window. So I opened the door. He said did you
25 hear that. I'm like hear what. I said I didn't hear nothing. He

1 said I heard an explosion. I says well, I'm not the way to a gas
2 leak down the block over here. He says maybe that's what it was.
3 I says maybe. So I kept on route.

4 Q. And roughly what intersection was that, do you remember?

5 A. Somewhere by 125th Street.

6 Q. About 125?

7 A. Somewhere over there.

8 Q. And there was a Con Ed employee?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Did you happen to get a name?

11 A. No.

12 MR. DOWNS: Mr. Singh, would there be a way to find out
13 if the -- who that person was?

14 MR. SINGH: Probably not because we have a work op
15 location at 110th Street and there's a -- I think there's a
16 customer service center somewhere down there for people to go to
17 pay bills.

18 MR. DOWNS: Okay.

19 MR. SINGH: It could be --

20 MR. DOWNS: We can work on that offline --

21 MR. SINGH: Yeah.

22 MR. DOWNS: -- but that's something we might want to
23 check out later on.

24 MR. SINGH: It's almost impossible for me to --

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, did you say he was in a

1 truck or --

2 MR. VASILAK: I was in a truck.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What was --

4 MR. VASILAK: The guy was --

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Just --

6 MR. VASILAK: -- came out of his car or wherever he came
7 from. I don't know where he came from. He was knocking on my
8 window, so I --

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But he had a Con Ed shirt on?

10 MR. VASILAK: He identified as a Con Ed employee.

11 BY MR. DOWNS:

12 Q. And the essence of the discussion was did you hear that
13 and you didn't hear anything, you've got the windows rolled up or
14 whatever?

15 A. I had the windows rolled up. Yes.

16 Q. And it was news to you at that point, but you indicated
17 you were on way to a job. Were you thinking that might be the
18 job?

19 A. At that point in time, yeah.

20 Q. That point you were thinking -- you're roughly at 125th
21 Street at that --

22 A. I had Bobby McDonald from the GERC calling me, what's
23 your ETA and I'm like soon. Soon. I'm on Park Avenue. I'm stuck
24 in traffic. I'm -- I'll be there soon, as soon as traffic allows.

25 Q. Bobby McDonald contacted you when you were on route?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Okay. So you didn't have any discussion with Kelly, but
3 McDonald did contact you. And, yeah. We don't' have a record of
4 that, Lenny. That's some of the stuff we might be missing here,
5 not realizing it was part of this record. We'll track those down.

6 MR. CHHATRE: I think --

7 MR. SINGH: We're on it.

8 MR. CHHATRE: -- he is making notes, so we'll get it.

9 MR. DOWNS: Good. Okay.

10 BY MR. DOWNS:

11 Q. Anybody else that you had dialogue with in terms of when
12 you initially got notified to go to the site and when you got to
13 the site?

14 A. No one else.

15 Q. Just McDonald.

16 A. Right.

17 Q. Okay. We do have the timing that you arrived at the
18 site and it looks like at 9:39.

19 A. If you say so.

20 Q. Okay. How far down were you able to get? The
21 transcript says you're at 119 and Park. I can see flames down the
22 block.

23 A. Right.

24 Q. This will help job your memory maybe a little bit. So
25 that's probably 2½ blocks or so from the site.

1 A. Right. That's --

2 Q. Okay. And you couldn't get any further with your
3 vehicle because it was blocked because of --

4 A. Traffic was at a standstill.

5 Q. Traffic. Okay. Did you get out of your truck or
6 anything to go further?

7 A. I parked the truck on 119th Street and walked down.

8 Q. Walked south and to --

9 A. Grabbed my gear and --

10 Q. Gear.

11 A. -- walked down there.

12 Q. Okay. And how far were you able to get on foot?

13 A. To the site of the explosion.

14 Q. Right in front of the building or --

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. And what did you do step by step at that point?

17 A. I called the GERC and told them the building's gone.

18 Q. Okay. The building's gone. Okay. Is this -- again, we
19 don't have names here. We just have a GERC call. Is that you by
20 chance? That's not you? Okay. Well --

21 A. That says nothing --

22 Q. -- we'll need to identify that offline at some point.

23 A. Is --

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. I don't even know what's being said there.

1 Q. Okay. I just wanted to see if it was familiar, but it's
2 not.

3 MR. SINGH: What did you say, do you know?

4 MR. DOWNS: Sorry?

5 MR. SINGH: Was it that (indiscernible)?

6 MR. DOWNS: Okay. We don't have a name or an identity
7 on these -- some of these.

8 MR. SINGH: Fagin (ph.) might be able to help on some of
9 this stuff.

10 MR. DOWNS: Okay. Right. Or we can do that offline.
11 We don't need to bother here.

12 BY MR. DOWNS:

13 Q. There was a Brian Morgan there at some point.

14 A. At some point.

15 Q. Yeah. Do you remember hooking up with a Mr. Brian
16 Morgan? You don't remember?

17 A. Not initially.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. I understand he was close to the -- he was also one of
20 the first guys there. I was the first guy. He must have been the
21 second guy, something close to that.

22 Q. Okay. Very good. So you got in front of the building.
23 What did you do after that? You called the GERC?

24 A. I called the GERC and they told me to hook up with Brian
25 Morgan. Which, I didn't see him and didn't hook up with him

1 immediately because there was a lot going on. There was fire,
2 there was smoke, there's people sitting on the sidewalk hurt.
3 There was a lot going on, so I stepped back, evaluate the
4 situation and I went inside to check the building, the next -- the
5 corner building.

6 Q. The corner -- the one on the corner building --

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. -- the location of the original call?

9 A. Right. The building north of the explosion.

10 Q. Right. The --

11 A. Because that's where I was.

12 Q. -- 1652 building.

13 A. Right.

14 Q. Right. And would that be a normal process in a
15 circumstance like this? You couldn't do anything for the two
16 buildings that had a fire there, obviously.

17 A. Right.

18 Q. So next best step was to go --

19 A. And at this point already, the fire department was all
20 over the place. They were evacuating the building. I mean it was
21 total mayhem.

22 Q. Okay. I understand. And did you find anything in the
23 1652 building?

24 A. Had gas in the telephone duct downstairs, had some low
25 atmosphere reading .1 or something like that.

1 Q. That's based upon your meter that you had with you?

2 A. Right.

3 Q. Okay. And what did you do then?

4 A. We sealed the duct. At this time, I have a lot of
5 people on the location. They're just -- people are pouring in to
6 assist, so --

7 Q. Right. I'm not familiar with the processes. Maybe you
8 can just walk us through a little bit. You're sealing up the --

9 A. Everything I have to do, like to seal the duct, I've got
10 to go back to the truck on 119th Street, grab some sealant and
11 pack the duct.

12 Q. Pack it up. Okay.

13 A. Right.

14 Q. Were you able to get your vehicle any closer to where
15 you were working there or --

16 A. Not for a while.

17 Q. Not for a while.

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. Did you identify yourself to the fire department as soon
20 as you got there?

21 A. No. They had their hands full. They were busy doing
22 everything and I am -- I stick out like a sore thumb. I've got my
23 vest on. I've got my blue hat on.

24 Q. It would have been obvious to anybody that --

25 A. It's obvious, there's Con Ed.

1 Q. Very good. That's fine. At some point, a supervisor
2 arrived at the site?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Who was that?

5 A. I think Lou Franca was the -- maybe the -- Lou Franca
6 was maybe the first --

7 Q. Lou Franca?

8 A. -- supervisor I saw there.

9 Q. Okay. And what was the essence of work with him in
10 terms of, what did you do with him?

11 A. Checking the building.

12 Q. Okay. Just the building you were in, the 1652?

13 A. I was on the north side. We had -- there were already
14 people coming there on the south side.

15 Q. So there were more crews showing up and assisting with
16 other sites around --

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. -- that particular block? And that would have been
19 their same role, in essence --

20 A. They --

21 Q. -- to check the building to make sure we had no other
22 gas leaks --

23 A. Right.

24 Q. -- present? Very good. All right. In your experience,
25 was this particular gas complaint handled essentially like any

1 prior complaint? In other words, the time you got the call to
2 where you actually arrived on site, you were just thinking it was
3 a routine call?

4 A. It's just another call.

5 Q. Just another call, nothing special jumped out at you?

6 A. No.

7 Q. Okay. Was there anything during the execution of the
8 event that might have hindered you in you -- in your response?
9 You mentioned there was some traffic.

10 A. That's about it.

11 Q. And --

12 A. Traffic related to the explosion on Park Avenue.

13 Q. And it was really just down in that neighborhood?

14 A. I wasn't -- the -- you get off the highway, its 132nd
15 Street. This thing happened at 117th Street.

16 Q. Right.

17 A. So you've got --

18 Q. So there was a lot of traffic from that point down to --

19 A. Right.

20 Q. -- on Park Avenue, but no traffic from where you got the
21 original call, 172nd or whatever?

22 A. I shot all the way down on --

23 Q. No traffic?

24 A. -- getting off Park Avenue --

25 Q. No problems in that --

1 A. -- in good timing.

2 Q. Good timing. Okay, good. That's my question. Yeah.

3 About how often do you receive and process gas order complaints?

4 How many do you get a typical day?

5 A. Every job is different. Some jobs, you could be there
6 for 3, 4 hours. That job, I was there all day.

7 Q. Right, right. I mean, do you get two or three gas odor
8 complaints every day typically or --

9 A. Sure.

10 Q. What would be the number, 5, 10, 2, 3?

11 A. Anything from zero to eight.

12 Q. Well, just -- zero to eight. Okay. That's fair enough.
13 Are there any records that are generated by you? Do you keep any
14 field notes or anything like that when you get a gas call?

15 A. Nothing.

16 Q. Nothing?

17 A. I have a little pad that I write the ticket number down,
18 apartment number, address. That's all.

19 Q. That would be like manual -- that would be the only
20 manual paperwork you would --

21 A. That would be it.

22 Q. Right. Is that available still? Do you keep a -- is
23 that like a log sheet?

24 A. No. It's something I have and I --

25 Q. Just your personal notation to help job your memory when

1 you actually get inside the site?

2 A. If I have to write a ticket out, a red tag, I'll have
3 the job number on there.

4 Q. I see. And the red tag, would it be put on a meter or
5 something to take it out of service or whatever?

6 A. Anything that I would take out of service, I would tag.

7 Q. I see. Okay. But this notebook you kept, that's just
8 your personal notebook that -- is that something that's company
9 issued or no?

10 A. No. It's just --

11 Q. Just personal?

12 A. Just a little pad.

13 Q. Do you know if other mechanics do the same process
14 similar? Do you know?

15 A. Yes. They all have a --

16 Q. Everybody has --

17 A. Everybody has a pad.

18 Q. Okay. And you don't maintain this. You just toss it
19 away when --

20 A. That's it.

21 Q. -- you're done with it? In this particular case, you
22 didn't have any -- see a need to keep it?

23 A. No.

24 Q. No. Okay. But you do enter into your computer system
25 step by step as you're working a job, your arrival time or

1 whatever or what you found; is that how it works?

2 A. On the computer screen, you hit the button or you touch
3 the screen, arrived. Upon completing the job, you fill out a
4 screen that pops up answering some routine -- answering same
5 questions for every gas leak.

6 Q. Right. And you completed that for this particular job.

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. It's obviously an unusual job.

9 A. Right.

10 Q. Were you able to finish all that paperwork?

11 A. It was done to a point.

12 Q. There's nothing further that you had to complete in
13 terms of on the records there that -- for the company?

14 A. Some things -- I had to draw up a -- on the outside gas
15 leak, what was -- comes in as an inside gas leak, outside gas -- I
16 don't recall if I had -- if it was dispatched as an inside and
17 outside gas leak or if it was just dispatched as the inside gas
18 leak.

19 Q. Yeah. Here's the --

20 A. Odor at the --

21 Q. Here, we got the --

22 A. -- apartment window.

23 Q. Here, we got the transcript of the initial alert. We
24 got -- he mentions that you just got at 51 and 41, if that looks
25 familiar, if that helps jog your memory.

1 A. I got a 51 East 117th Street, apartment, lady complained
2 of smell in her bedroom. Also, a 41 coming from the same
3 location. Okay.

4 Q. So right away --

5 A. Well, it came in as a 51/41.

6 Q. You would know right away exactly what you're going to
7 find, more or less, when you got to the site?

8 A. I would go into the building first, check the building,
9 check -- see what the customer's complaining about, what are they
10 -- see if I can identify what they're smelling because, in a
11 building, you can smell all kinds of odors.

12 Q. And is a situation, just for your normal practices, if
13 it's an obvious big gas leak, you would evacuate the building or
14 what would be your process?

15 A. If I had elevated atmospheric readings, I would evacuate
16 the building.

17 Q. Would you call the fire department or you would notify
18 the GERC to call the fire department?

19 A. If I had atmospheric readings, I'd notify the GERC.
20 They'd call the fire department.

21 Q. That would be the normal procedure?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Good. Okay. Are there any operations or procedural
24 manuals that you use during the normal course of your --

25 A. Well --

1 Q. -- job?

2 A. Excuse me. Just like if I was outside and I had a heavy
3 odor, I may not get an atmospheric reading outside --

4 Q. Going back to the previous question.

5 A. Right. If I was outside and I had a heavy odor, I'd
6 tell them before I classify the condition as being Type 1, 2A,
7 whatever --

8 Q. Right.

9 A. -- I'd call for a crew. I have a heavy odor. Send me a
10 crew. And if I would say I have a heavy odor, the GERC would send
11 the fire department --

12 Q. Follow-up.

13 A. -- with -- they dispatch the Con Ed crew and they would
14 dispatch, you know, the fire department.

15 Q. Yeah. I'm just trying to get for the record, the
16 standard process that --

17 A. Right.

18 Q. -- you would go through. I'm not necessarily familiar
19 with the step by step.

20 A. Right.

21 Q. But I'm glad you -- appreciated that you clarified that.
22 Are there any operations or procedural manuals that you use during
23 the normal course of your job?

24 A. I pretty much know my job.

25 Q. But there's no manuals that you would keep in your truck

1 in terms of --

2 A. There's something on the computer if I wanted to --

3 Q. The computer has something?

4 A. -- that if I want to reference it. That's rare.

5 Q. You've been there long enough, you know pretty much --

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. -- what to do in every case. Fair enough. Okay. Let's
8 see. This particular day, did you have a need to consult your
9 computer for any --

10 A. No.

11 Q. -- procedures? You knew exactly what to do?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Good. Knowing what you know now, given the benefit of
14 hindsight, is there anything as a lessons learned, is there
15 anything that you would do differently or would like to suggest to
16 be done differently in a future event?

17 A. Nothing.

18 Q. Nothing? Sometimes we find, for example, there are
19 little subtleties because each catastrophe is different.
20 Sometimes little things that say oh, you know, if I'd known now
21 what I know, I would have done something different.

22 A. I couldn't have --

23 Q. Nothing?

24 A. I couldn't have gotten there any quicker.

25 Q. Fair enough. Are there any -- let's see. Were there

1 any remote operated shutoff valves in the area of the gas odor
2 report? In other words, the two buildings that had the fire --

3 A. I have no knowledge of any remote operator valves --

4 Q. Meaning --

5 A. -- in the system.

6 Q. -- curved valves. Typically --

7 A. Remote operated, I have no knowledge of anything --

8 Q. No knowledge?

9 A. -- remotely --

10 Q. How about manually operated --

11 A. -- operated.

12 Q. -- valves? Typically there's a curve valve --

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. -- in a service line between the --

15 A. Typically.

16 Q. -- main and normally, you could go to a curved valve to
17 close a service if necessary, that would be the process?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And in this particular case, was it a situation where
20 all the debris from the buildings fell into the sidewalk, that you
21 could --

22 A. There was --

23 Q. -- not get to the valves; is that correct?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Do you have a copy of the Department of Transportation

1 emergency response guide in your truck? Do you know what I'm
2 talking about?

3 A. I don't know what you're --

4 Q. It's an --

5 A. -- talking about.

6 Q. -- orange cover book and it indicates the procedures to
7 be followed if you've got a hazmat item like natural gas or
8 something?

9 A. I'm not sure what you --

10 Q. Not familiar with it?

11 A. I'm not sure what you're talking about.

12 Q. Okay. Fair enough. All right. That concludes my
13 questions for the moment.

14 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Kelly?

15 BY MR. EMEABA:

16 Q. Rick has asked almost all the whole question. Were you
17 verbally given any information concerning the incident apartment
18 from the order -- job order you receive in your computer? Were
19 there other proper instructions you were given?

20 A. No.

21 Q. No. So what prompted you to go to the incident site or
22 accident site was you received the work order?

23 A. Right.

24 Q. Since you were given job orders for outside and inside
25 leaks, which one would you have investigated first?

1 A. The inside leak. The building is priority.

2 Q. So if you are going there and you had a strong odor,
3 which one would you have started first?

4 A. The building.

5 Q. Okay. And was anything unusual about the ticket given
6 to you or that stands out that could prompt you to do things
7 differently from your normal response?

8 A. No.

9 Q. No. Do you always have inside and outside leak job
10 orders at the same time?

11 A. Not always. Sometimes. When the call comes in at a
12 window, I smell it at a window, they generate an inside and
13 outside ticket often.

14 Q. Okay. Have you had a situation that, after receiving
15 work -- job orders, you think it necessary to call for a backup
16 immediately to work with you to the -- at that incident site or
17 that location?

18 A. Sometimes.

19 Q. What makes you do that?

20 A. Heavy odor.

21 Q. Thank you.

22 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Chris?

23 BY MR. STOLICKY:

24 Q. I have questions. Just a follow-up on what Rick was
25 talking about. Chris Stolicky for the record. The emergency

1 response guide book, that's typically given to someone who's taken
2 a HAZWOPER course. Are you guys HAZWOPER trained?

3 A. You're talking about the book that has chemical --

4 Q. Is that the --

5 A. Oh yeah, I got that.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's it.

7 Q. Right.

8 MR. DOWNS: Okay. We'll note that for the record.

9 MR. CHHATRE: Right. That's the (indiscernible).

10 MR. VASILAK: Now that I know --

11 MR. DOWNS: What it looks like.

12 MR. VASILAK: Yeah. I have that.

13 BY MR. STOLICKY:

14 Q. Visual is --

15 A. I always associate that book with chemical issues.

16 That's --

17 MR. DOWNS: Natural gas is a chemical.

18 MR. VASILAK: Well, yes, but something I'm very familiar
19 with.

20 MR. DOWNS: Very good.

21 MR. SINGH: And covered in our specifications.

22 MR. DOWNS: Thank you.

23 BY MR. STOLICKY:

24 Q. So since you were one of the first people on the scene,
25 at what point did you smell gas? I mean where were you when you

1 first noticed an odor of gas?

2 A. The first time I smelled gas?

3 Q. On that site.

4 A. Downstairs in the basement of the corner building, up
5 there at the telephone duct.

6 Q. That would be --

7 MR. DOWNS: That's in the --

8 Q. -- 1652?

9 MR. DOWNS: -- 1652 building?

10 MR. VASILAK: Yeah. If that's the corner -- that's the
11 --

12 MR. DOWNS: Right.

13 MR. VASILAK: -- north corner building. Yeah.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We have a --

15 MR. DOWNS: We have a map up there.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- map up there if you want to
17 point it out.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Or the other one is better, the
19 one that Ravi had before (indiscernible).

20 BY MR. STOLICKY:

21 Q. What about outside, you didn't smell any --

22 A. No. I didn't smell any gas outside. There was too much
23 smoke. It was a disaster. There was smoke, I mean chocking
24 smoke.

25 Q. Yeah. Okay. So just to confirm, typical emergency

1 response, when you get on scene, basically park the truck, you hit
2 the button that logs in your arrival time?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. All right. So you say that when you get on scene and
5 there is an indication or it came from the original call that
6 there was a smell of gas inside, you go in and you check it for a
7 reading?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. One question I have is what type of reading do you need
10 in order to evacuate that building?

11 A. Any reading that I can't quickly ventilate. I would --

12 Q. Is there a certain percent of gas, the threshold?

13 A. Once I start getting one percent is when I would do it.
14 That's a lot of gas. One percent is a lot of gas. That's --

15 Q. I agree.

16 A. It's --

17 Q. And then if you -- and would that kind of reading
18 automatically cause you to call GERC?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. After you would get a reading like that in a building,
21 what structures would you check next?

22 A. I would check adjacent buildings.

23 Q. What if it's in an apartment, a multi apartment or
24 multi-unit building, what would you check next?

25 A. I may check the apartments next to it. I would check

1 the apartment below.

2 Q. Is this in a (indiscernible) --

3 A. Gas rises.

4 Q. -- somewhere or is this from experience or is this
5 through your training at the training center that you would
6 automatically go that direction?

7 A. Well, gas rises. If I have readings in one apartment, I
8 would check the apartment below. I had a job the other day. I
9 had indications in the building. I went three floors down and to
10 the other side of the building to get to the leak. It was -- I
11 was there for hours looking for this thing.

12 Q. I mean, you're someone (indiscernible) --

13 A. I mean I check with --

14 Q. -- (indiscernible) --

15 A. I check a lot of things --

16 Q. -- experience.

17 A. -- tracing the gas odor, the gas readings.

18 Q. So does that effort come from your experience on the job
19 or was that formal training from Con Ed to say that you should go
20 to these certain apartment --

21 A. It's a lot of job experience.

22 MR. DOWNS: Or maybe a combination of both?

23 MR. VASILAK: Absolutely.

24 MR. CHHATRE: Let him, please.

25 BY MR. STOLICKY:

1 Q. Okay. When you got on site, did you see any signs of
2 excavation activity, meaning like a construction worker truck or a
3 backhoe sitting somewhere or --

4 A. I don't recall anything like that.

5 Q. Okay. When you're responding to this inside/outside
6 leak situation and you've essentially received both an outside gas
7 leak and an inside gas leak, what type of leak record would you
8 fill out? I mean, when you fill out -- when you go out there and
9 start doing a leak investigation pattern, pot holes, your
10 foundation 5-foot and so on, do you create two different leak
11 records?

12 A. Well, there's the inside leak record and there's the
13 outside leak record. It's two different job numbers.

14 Q. So it would result in two separate incidents?

15 A. Two separate -- it's two separate jobs.

16 Q. Do those efforts overlap at all, the readings you take?

17 A. I don't understand your question.

18 Q. When you respond to an inside gas leak --

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. -- the way I understand your procedure is, is that
21 you're supposed to go back out, check fires to see if it could be
22 in any kind of conduits or additional POEs connected to that
23 building and others; is that right? Do I understand that
24 correctly? Or do you have to have a reading (indiscernible) --

25 A. You check where your -- you check where the -- on

1 responding to an inside leak, you check where your -- where the
2 odor takes you, where the readings take you. You trace the odor
3 to its source. If that involves checking the plate, maybe.

4 Q. So you said you got a gas reading in what we think was a
5 telephone duct.

6 A. Telephone. Now we're going to the outside
7 investigation.

8 Q. So that changes it from an inside to an outside?

9 A. To an outside. It's telling me I have an outside
10 investigation.

11 Q. So would the procedure require you to check additional
12 buildings then?

13 A. Absolutely. You're going -- you're trying to locate the
14 telephone manhole. You're checking buildings on either side.

15 Q. Now do you try to get in those building, those adjacent
16 --

17 A. Of course.

18 Q. -- buildings?

19 A. Of course. You don't try. You get in. If you need the
20 fire department to gain access, you call the fire department to
21 provide access.

22 MR. STOLICKY: That's all I have.

23 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Leonard?

24 BY MR. SINGH:

25 Q. John, when you got to the scene after you finished with

1 the building, you went outside. There was smoke and fire and a
2 lot of activity. Did you go up and down the block besides moving
3 towards the scene where the collapsed buildings were?

4 A. I went up and down the block. Yes.

5 Q. Yeah. Did you see water in the street, anything --

6 A. No, I did not.

7 Q. -- other than fire trucks?

8 A. No. Just the fire trucks, the hoses, the water from
9 them.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. I didn't see any unusual amount of water.

12 Q. Any odor of gas up and down that block as you were --

13 A. I didn't --

14 Q. -- walking?

15 A. I didn't notice it.

16 Q. Okay. Did you take readings?

17 A. The only time I had a noticeable gas odor out there was
18 when they -- later on in the -- during the incident, there was a
19 backhoe there removing the street, removing the blacktop and when
20 they pulled up the blacktop, you -- it just -- the gas poured out.

21 Q. What time -- do you remember when that was?

22 A. No.

23 Q. What point?

24 A. That was -- that's going down --

25 MR. DOWNS: What location was that? Do you remember?

1 MR. VASILAK: The location? Right in front of the
2 building.

3 MR. STOLICKY: Which one?

4 MR. VASILAK: The one that blew up.

5 MR. STOLICKY: 44 or 46?

6 MR. VASILAK: I don't know if it's in front of 44 or 46.
7 In front of one of them.

8 MR. EMEABA: Well, was it in front of the building that
9 was still standing?

10 MR. VASILAK: No. It was in front of the buildings that
11 were gone. They had to remove debris.

12 MR. DOWNS: Did you have to use a meter or anything?
13 This was just obvious by nose that you could --

14 MR. VASILAK: It was obvious.

15 MR. DOWNS: -- smell it?

16 MR. VASILAK: Yeah. I did not use a meter, no.

17 MR. DOWNS: You didn't --

18 MR. VASILAK: Not at that --

19 MR. DOWNS: In other words, you didn't need a meter at
20 that point, it was very obvious.

21 MR. VASILAK: That there was gas odor.

22 MR. EMEABA: Do you want to show us by (indiscernible)
23 before you -- show it in map, to point to where yourself -- I mean
24 this one on the maps?

25 MR. CHHATRE: The other map too if you want.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think the other maps are better

2 --

3 MR. SINGH: The color one --

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- isn't it?

5 MR. SINGH: The color one is must better, John. There's
6 another one right here.

7 MR. DOWNS: Let's momentarily go off the record here
8 until we get the map.

9 (Off the record.)

10 (On the record.)

11 MR. VASILAK: Let's see. Here we are. Right in front.

12 MR. DOWNS: Okay. Here's the 44 building.

13 MR. VASILAK: Yeah.

14 MR. DOWNS: 46 building. This was still standing.

15 MR. VASILAK: Yes.

16 MR. DOWNS: Back on the record. We have the 1642
17 building, 1644 and 1646 building. Which building roughly and
18 where were you standing when you smelled it?

19 MR. VASILAK: I was standing south of the building here
20 on Park Avenue.

21 MR. DOWNS: Meaning south of the 1642 building.

22 MR. VASILAK: Yes. And they were digging in front of
23 the building in front --

24 MR. EMEABA: Removing what?

25 MR. VASILAK: Debris, building. They were removing

1 building. They were removing street --

2 MR. DOWNS: And you --

3 MR. VASILAK: -- asphalt.

4 MR. DOWNS: You just said that when they pulled up the

5 asphalt, you smelled it in front of the 1644 building, roughly

6 right here.

7 MR. VASILAK: I was standing down here. I smelled it

8 down here when they pulled up the street --

9 MR. DOWNS: The street in front of 1644. Okay.

10 MR. VASILAK: Yeah.

11 MR. DOWNS: Good. We're clear on that.

12 MR. STOLICKY: Who's they just to be clear, fire

13 department?

14 MR. VASILAK: The operator of the backhoe.

15 MR. STOLICKY: Who was working for?

16 MR. VASILAK: I don't know.

17 MR. STOLICKY: Was it Con Ed?

18 MR. VASILAK: No. It was a huge backhoe. It must have

19 been the city.

20 MR. DOWNS: Yeah. City had a bunch of contractors, I

21 believe.

22 MR. STOLICKY: Does the name Russo ring a bell?

23 MR. VASILAK: No.

24 MR. STOLICKY: Was it Russo?

25 MR. CHHATRE: What time was it?

1 MR. VASILAK: Time?

2 MR. CHHATRE: Um-hum.

3 MR. VASILAK: I don't know.

4 MR. CHHATRE: (Indiscernible) was it several hours
5 afterwards or --

6 MR. VASILAK: This is hours after the incident.

7 MR. CHHATRE: We're just trying to find out the
8 equipment which was on the scene, how -- you know, what time frame
9 on it.

10 MR. VASILAK: Well, the fire department was fire --
11 fighting the fire and the -- what was going on with the building.
12 So this had to take -- this had to happen after the fire
13 department removed their equipment to some degree. They had to
14 get the backhoe in there. You have fire hoses everywhere. So
15 this was hours after the initial incident.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So the fire department had
17 already left.

18 MR. VASILAK: No. They didn't leave.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Just backed out --

20 MR. VASILAK: They were withdrawn enough so that they
21 could get this piece of equipment in there.

22 MR. CHHATRE: Go ahead, Lenny. I know we interrupted
23 you, but --

24 MR. SINGH: It's all right. That's fine. I mean, good
25 discussion.

1 BY MR. SINGH:

2 Q. Any other readings you found up and down the block at
3 all?

4 A. I had many people -- at this point, I had many people
5 all over the place taking readings. I was the guy who drew up the
6 paperwork, the outside leak with the input from the other
7 mechanics who had taken readings and -- all over the place;
8 subsurface structures, buildings, curb lines. I was putting it
9 all down on a paper.

10 Q. I see.

11 A. Or putting it all down in the computer.

12 MR. SINGH: Right. That's all the questions I have.

13 MR. CHHATRE: Frank?

14 BY MR. McCARTON:

15 Q. John, you said you were there right almost
16 instantaneously, right? I mean you pulled up and --

17 A. I was there maybe 5 minutes after it --

18 Q. Right afterwards.

19 A. -- happened. Five -- I don't know exact number of
20 minutes, but --

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. -- maybe 5, 10 minutes after it happened.

23 Q. And then you stayed the entire day down there?

24 A. Yeah. I was there until midnight.

25 Q. I just want to ask a question. The smell of gas that

1 was emanating that you said you smell, was it great on 117th
2 Street or was it greater on 116th Street? Do you remember or
3 recall?

4 A. Well, I smelled it when I was south of it, when they
5 pulled up the street. That's the -- when I caught a whiff.

6 Q. Okay. It wasn't apparent when you got out of the truck?

7 A. No. No. All you had at that point was a roaring -- the
8 flame was shooting out 15 feet into Park Avenue. It was quite the
9 scene. I mean all you had was smoke and fire.

10 Q. So you had the fire. Was it the ignition source -- or
11 the fire was gone because it was gas fed -- a gas fed fire,
12 correct? Is that what you're saying?

13 A. No.

14 Q. No.

15 A. I'm saying the building was rubble. I'm saying there
16 was a fire. Was it gas fed? I have no idea if it was gas fed.

17 Q. But you said it was shooting out.

18 A. It was --

19 Q. Did it look like it was a gas fed fire?

20 A. No. If it was a gas fed fire, it'd maintain that -- it
21 would maintain the same flame, wouldn't it?

22 Q. Well, I'm not an expert in gas and --

23 A. If --

24 Q. -- you are.

25 A. -- you have a gas fed fire, the fire's under pressure,

1 under constant pressure.

2 Q. Right.

3 A. It -- you're going to have a constant flame. This thing
4 was a rollout. The flames were shooting in and out. I mean I'm
5 not a fire expert. I've seen gas fires. This didn't look like a
6 gas fire.

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

8 MR. DOWNS: This did not look like a gas fire, so it was
9 just the debris of the building that was burning?

10 MR. VASILAK: Yes.

11 MR. DOWNS: Okay.

12 MR. MCCARTON: I'm good.

13 MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm good.

15 MR. STOLICKY: When you --

16 MR. CHHATRE: Chris?

17 BY MR. STOLICKY:

18 Q. When you were taking the readings, and I haven't seen
19 the leak records, so just based on what you recall. When you were
20 taking the leak readings in the electric manholes, to my
21 understanding, there were gas readings in the electric manholes.
22 Do you remember whether it was higher on the 116 side or the 117
23 side?

24 A. I don't recall.

25 Q. All right. Because the 117 is where you originally went

1 down to the 1652 (indiscernible) --

2 A. I had gas in many places. I don't recall if it was
3 higher here or higher there.

4 MR. STOLICKY: Okay.

5 BY MR. CHHATRE:

6 Q. Okay. I have a couple of questions. For the record,
7 please look at the document that Lenny has sent me on March 13th.
8 Do you see the one you generated (indiscernible) collecting data?
9 Do you input in there? Did you generate this?

10 A. Yes. This is -- this appears to be my drawing.

11 Q. For the record, for the, I guess, audience, tell us what
12 you see, where you see the readings in the drawing. Maybe that
13 will help you answer --

14 A. I --

15 Q. -- the -- Chris' question --

16 MR. STOLICKY: Yeah.

17 Q. -- in terms of readings, higher on 117 Street or higher
18 on 116 Street.

19 A. I see readings in the sewers and some Con Ed manholes.
20 Are there --

21 Q. The reading on there, can you tell us what those columns
22 mean to you in the next page?

23 A. Well, they're entering readings. They're documenting
24 the reading in the structure at the test point.

25 Q. It is the percentage gas or percentage (indiscernible)?

1 A. Percentage gas.

2 Q. On the tables?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. And on the drawing there on the tables, what is the
5 highest reading you see and can you tell us where it is?

6 A. Let's see. 27 is 40. Is that a 57 or 37? I can't
7 tell. That's not a 37. Maybe it's 57. 57 is 7. Well, that
8 would tell me that the higher reading is on 27. It would be going
9 south, which would -- if I recall, the street slopes. It slopes.
10 It has a grading pitching north, so it'd make sense to have a
11 higher reading going south. The sewer is 28. What's that? Ten
12 percent in the sewer, BPM, 30 -- 30.3. And then there was the --
13 on the cable box. What's that, 64? Forty-five.

14 Q. Forty-five percent gas?

15 A. In a cable box.

16 Q. In a cable box.

17 A. Right.

18 Q. And where is that box located?

19 A. Excuse me?

20 Q. Where is that box located?

21 A. The box is located on the north side of 117th Street.

22 MR. CHHATRE: (Indiscernible) questions, I hope it
23 answers your questions.

24 MR. STOLICKY: What was the reading?

25 MR. VASILAK: It was 45 in a cable box.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Forty-five.

2 MR. CHHATRE: Is that electric cable or telephone cable?

3 MR. VASILAK: Telephone cable box.

4 MR. CHHATRE: Telephone cable.

5 MR. STOLICKY: What was the reading up on the 116
6 (indiscernible)?

7 MR. VASILAK: Let's see. That was 27. Forty.

8 MR. STOLICKY: They're about the same, really.

9 MR. CHHATRE: Yes. (Indiscernible). Thank you so much
10 for that.

11 MR. VASILAK: Been a long time since I've seen that
12 drawing.

13 MR. CHHATRE: Since we are scheduled, I made a point to
14 bring that with me.

15 BY MR. CHHATRE:

16 Q. Okay. I'm going to ask you a few questions not
17 necessarily related to your job as a mechanic going to take care
18 of the call, but you were there pretty much at the same time or
19 just shortly after the building blew up.

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. And you walked to the explosion site at that time.

22 A. From 119th Street.

23 Q. Right. And you said the firefighters were already
24 there?

25 A. Firefighters? Yes.

1 Q. Do you recall what time you walked up to the building?

2 A. I parked the truck. I got out, threw out a couple of
3 cones, put my vest and hat on, grabbed my bag and walked down
4 there. That maybe takes 3 to 5 minutes.

5 MR. DOWNS: We have a time stamp.

6 MR. VASILAK: And I'm walking down there.

7 BY MR. CHHATRE:

8 Q. Good. Could you tell us how -- if you could see the
9 street, did you see any water on the street, water anywhere?

10 A. The only water I saw --

11 Q. Was the fire --

12 A. I didn't see any -- I take it you -- you're angling
13 toward do I see an active water main break.

14 Q. Right.

15 A. That's where I think you're trying to go with the
16 question.

17 Q. No. I'm trying to find out if you saw any water line
18 break.

19 A. Water main break?

20 Q. Well, yes. I'm not --

21 A. No, I did not see any.

22 Q. I heard you there. I'm just trying to find out what --

23 A. I've seen water --

24 Q. -- you saw.

25 A. -- main breaks where water's pouring down the street.

1 Q. Okay. So you --

2 A. I did not see anything like that.

3 Q. (Indiscernible).

4 A. I saw some runoff from the building fire from the hoses,
5 from the firemen.

6 Q. And I'm not trying to drive you to anything. I'm just
7 trying to find out what you saw --

8 A. Right.

9 Q. -- in there. Don't misunderstand the question. If you
10 have problems, just ask me. There are about three questions here
11 (indiscernible) ask you them.

12 A. I'm --

13 Q. So we are trying to see what you saw through your eyes.

14 A. Right.

15 Q. That's the purpose of the questions.

16 A. Right.

17 Q. So could you describe the site a little bit to me? Were
18 the flames going through 1642? They were going in the middle or
19 if you saw?

20 A. The flames were shorting out toward the Metro North
21 structure. The smoke was everywhere. Checking the building next
22 door, the smoke was in the building. The smoke was in -- the
23 smoke would vary in intensity. Sometimes it was very heavy in the
24 building depending on where the wind was going and so on. A lot
25 of hoses out there. Firemen were very busy.

1 Q. I can imagine that. This drawing that we just
2 discussed, you said many people were taking those readings. Do
3 you recall roughly when those readings were taken?

4 A. They were taken ongoing through the whole night,
5 monitoring the buildings, monitoring the structures.

6 Q. For several hours after the accident?

7 A. Excuse me?

8 Q. Several hours after the accident?

9 A. Not -- they were -- the buildings were monitored
10 continuously. The structures were monitored, right? There was
11 plenty of people there doing this.

12 Q. Doing the readings.

13 A. I wasn't doing all of that by myself.

14 Q. Did you take any readings at all?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Were did you take those readings?

17 A. In the corner building, the building that exploded. Not
18 -- north of the explosion.

19 Q. North of the explosion.

20 A. Yes.

21 MR. DOWNS: The 1652 building.

22 MR. VASILAK: Yes.

23 BY MR. CHHATRE:

24 Q. And what -- do you remember the readings, what those
25 readings were?

1 A. They're on the sheet.

2 Q. That's fine. That's fine. Now I think during one of
3 these questions, you mentioned you smell the gas (indiscernible)
4 if you were to smell the gas strong, that you will call the --
5 what is the acronym?

6 A. GERC.

7 Q. (Indiscernible) emergency response.

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. And they did call the fire department?

10 A. Um-hum.

11 Q. What's your procedure? Are you allowed to call fire
12 department directly?

13 A. I don't.

14 Q. I know you don't, but my question is not that. The
15 question is are you allowed to make that judgment call and call
16 the fire department directly?

17 A. I've never done it.

18 Q. Again, my question is are you allowed to do that?
19 Whether you have done it or not --

20 A. I don't --

21 Q. -- is not the question

22 A. -- know of any restriction --

23 Q. That's --

24 A. -- against me doing it.

25 Q. Your --

1 A. I have never done it.

2 Q. Is your procedures says that you can call or the
3 procedure says you have to call the headquarters or the emergency
4 response center?

5 MR. DOWNS: The GERC.

6 MR. VASILAK: The GERC.

7 BY MR. CHHATRE:

8 Q. (Indiscernible) the procedures.

9 A. Yes. I'm not --

10 Q. And my question is --

11 A. I'm not certain what the procedure says as to us calling
12 or the GERC calling. I always notify --

13 Q. Call them.

14 A. -- the GERC.

15 Q. And since you were there within minutes, how the wind --
16 well, probably not a question because probably, building already
17 was on fire so (indiscernible). As you were driving, did you
18 notice, was it breezy that day or --

19 A. I don't know.

20 Q. That's fine. That's fair. And how many gas fires you
21 have seen in the past. I think you mentioned to Frank's question
22 that you couldn't -- it did not look like a gas fire to you, so --

23 A. I've seen gas fires in manholes.

24 Q. Not on the building structures?

25 A. Not in building structures. No.

1 MR. DOWNS: For 24 years, it's never been a building
2 structure?

3 MR. VASILAK: I haven't seen them.

4 MR. CHHATRE: He hasn't seen it.

5 MR. VASILAK: Thank God.

6 BY MR. CHHATRE:

7 Q. And you left around midnight that day? You were on the
8 scene --

9 A. I was on the scene until shortly before midnight.

10 Q. Okay. Do you recall if there was a water main break
11 during your stay there?

12 A. No.

13 Q. So nobody mentioned it to you, you didn't see anything?

14 A. I didn't see any water main break.

15 MR. CHHATRE: And that's all I have. Thank you so much
16 for clarifying some of these questions. Any follow-up questions?

17 BY MR. DOWNS:

18 Q. Just a quick one for me. Mr. Vasilak, getting your
19 testimony, is there any other thoughts or factual observations
20 that you would like to offer that have resulted from your
21 testimony, anything you can think of that you'd like to add to
22 your testimony?

23 A. No.

24 Q. Nothing? Okay. I'm good.

25 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Frank?

1 MR. MCCARTON: I'm good.

2 MR. CHHATRE: Lenny?

3 MR. SINGH: I'm all set.

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

5 MR. DOWNS: Thank you.

6 MR. CHHATRE: I appreciate your stopping by and helping
7 us.

8 MR. DOWNS: Off the record.

9 MR. CHHATRE: Off the record.

10 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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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 John Vasilak

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-14-MP-002

PLACE: New York, New York

DATE: August 7, 2014

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.

Tiffany Meeker
Transcriber