UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:	*
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NATURAL GAS DISTRIBUTION PIPELINE	*
LEAK AND MULTISTORY STRUCTURE	* Docket No.: DCA-14-MP-002
EXPLOSION IN HARLEM, NEW YORK	*
MARCH 12, 2014	*
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Interview of: ANTHONY LETO

Con Edison
4 Irving Place
New York, New York

Tuesday,
August 5, 2014

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: RAVI CHHATRE
Investigator-in-Charge

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
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New York, New York
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ANASTASIOS GEORGELIS, Director of Field Operations
Bureau of Water and Sewer 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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ROBERT ALBANO
(Representative on behalf of Mr. Leto)

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I N T E R V I E W

MR. CHHATRE: Good afternoon. Today is Tuesday, August 5, 2014. We are currently in Con Edison's facility located at 4 Irving Place, New York, and we are meeting regarding the investigation of natural gas distribution pipeline leak and multistory structure 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, D.C., 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 and identifying any typographical errors. The transcripts may be posted in NTSB's public docket.

Also, I would like to inform Mr. Anthony Leto that you are permitted to have one other person present with you during the interview. This is a person of your choice: your supervisor, a 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, your title, business contact information such as mailing address, and whom you have chosen to be present with you during your interview today.

MR. LETO: Okay. My name is Anthony Leto, L-e-t-o. I'm the Section Manager of Gas Transmission Planning and Pipeline Integrity here at Con Edison. I have Bob Albano with me today. My phone number? What else did you want?

MR. CHHATRE: Your phone number, e-mail --

MR. LETO: My e-mail address is --

MR. CHHATRE: But only business.

MR. LETO: Yes, [redacted]

MR. CHHATRE: Thank you.

Now, we'll go around and introduce ourselves. Please state for the record your name, spelling of your name, your title, organization that you represent, and your business contact information, starting from my right.

MR. NICHOLSON: Matthew Nicholson, Investigator, NTSB. Spelled Matthew, M-a-t-t-h-e-w, Nicholson, N-i-c-h-o-l-s-o-n. My e-mail is [redacted].

MR. KELLY: Kalu Kelly Emeaba, K-a-l-u, K-e-l-l-y, E-m-e-a-b-a. I'm an investigator with NTSB. My e-mail address is [redacted]

MR. McCARTON: My name's Frank McCarton, Deputy Commissioner for Operations of the Office of Emergency Management for the City of New York. I'm a New York State party member on this investigation. My e-mail address is [redacted]

MR. GEORGELIS: My name is Anastasios, A-n-a-s-t-a-s-i-

o-s, G-e-o-r-g-e-l-i-s. I'm here with Frank. I work for the New York City Department of Environmental Protection. My title is Director of Field Operations. E-mail address is [redacted]

MR. SINGH: Leonard Singh, L-e-o-n-a-r-d, S-i-n-g-h, Chief Engineer of Gas Distribution Engineering, the NTSB party rep representing Con Edison on this team. [redacted]

MR. STOLICKY: Chris Stolicky, S-t-o-l-i-c-k-y. I am the New York State party rep on this investigation. I'm Utility Supervisor (Safety) for the New York State Department of Public Service. E-mail is [redacted]

MR. ALBANO: Robert Albano, R-o-b-e-r-t, A-l-b-a-n-o. I'm accompanying Mr. Leto.

MR. CHHATRE: Thank you.

INTERVIEW OF ANTHONY LETO

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. Mr. Leto, for the record, can you describe your education, formal trainings and background, and what you do with Con Edison?

A. Okay. I've got a bachelor's of science degree in chemical engineering. I also have a master's in business administration. I'm also a registered gas distribution professional from GTI. I've been with Con Edison almost 28 years. I'm currently the section manager of gas transmission planning and gas transmission pipeline integrity in our engineering department

here at Con Edison.

Q. Thank you. Can you tell us what happened on the day of the accident? When you did you report on the scene? I guess walk us through what you did.

A. Okay. The day of the accident, I reported to scene late that day or the next day. I'm trying to think. It was after the NTSB was on site.

Q. Okay.

A. That's when I arrived for the first time to the scene. So at which time, I met the NTSB and I was introduced as the liaison between the NTSB and the operations group at Con Edison.

Q. Can you tell us what you saw on the scene when you arrived?

A. When I arrived, I saw the collapse of -- the buildings were collapsed, the debris pile. They were in the process of using heavy equipment to remove the debris from the site. The fire department was still on location making sure that there was no flare-ups or anything, and the clean-up was continuing at that time.

Q. Now, when you arrived, did you see any break in the water main? Was the main already broken and -- or?

A. I did not see the water main break.

Q. Okay. When you arrived, did you know there was a water main break?

A. I was informed of that.

Q. Okay. Did you see where the break was?
A. No, I did not.
Q. So tell us about the fire banks and what was done in terms of the fire bank and the other work that we did, excavation work.
A. Okay. Prior to my arrival, they had excavated one, two -- three fire banks to physically isolate the affected section of main. The fire banks were located far enough away from the incident so that the workers' safety was ensured. We continued after we got access. We excavated over the services to gain access and we pressure tested sections of the affected piece of pipe.
Q. Okay. Do you recall how many pressure tests were done?
A. No, not offhand.
Q. Okay. Do you know the pressure held?
A. On the main? No.
Q. Yes, on the main.
A. No.
Q. Now, we also tried to locate the possible leak by using, I guess like Lenny said, some new technique that was used for the first time? Len?
A. Yes, PFT.
Q. And can you describe that for the record?
A. Okay. PFT is a gas that we use when we look for leaks on the gas -- on the electric transmission system. It was

introduced into the gas main that has -- was previously isolated. And specialized equipment ride over the main looking for where this PF -- where there's trace of gas may escape from the gas main. So we had two vehicles that rode over the main. The technicians were in the vehicle monitoring their readings, and they did get one very high reading just south of the affected building.

Q. Can you use the map, and maybe describe for the transcriber what you are seeing? This is not --

A. Oh, okay. I'm looking upside down.

Q. Turn the map around if you want.

A. Oh, okay. No, this is all right. So these are the two buildings. So the two vehicles were riding over the main. They rode along Park Avenue and also along 116th Street, the isolated section of distribution main. They received a higher reading in front of 1642 Park Avenue.

Q. Okay. Now, were you there when the excavation was done, because the ground kind of gave way and the --

A. Yes.

Q. Maybe you could then go on to describe that. What happened?

A. Okay. When we got access to excavate over the gas distribution main, we noticed a number of voids in the ground. At one point we actually had to put a harness on the individual performing the excavation, the hand excavation, for his safety.

There was a lot of heavy concrete or roadway asphalt over the gas facilities. When they were removed, we did end up seeing a damaged section of gas distribution piping that was plastic and the associated service T.

Q. Okay.

MR. CHHATRE: And I'll just go around on this particular issue. Then I will talk to you on the integrity management.

MR. LETO: Okay.

MR. CHHATRE: Kelly?

MR. KELLY: Um-hum.

BY MR. KELLY:

Q. You mentioned the banks and the test and you did state that at 1642 you observed high readings.

A. Of the PFT, correct.

Q. Of the PFT. Now, which indicates what, please?

A. That the tracer gas was escaping -- it's from within the gas main.

Q. Okay. What does that mean?

A. It means that the tracer gas was no longer being contained within the gas facility. Because it was injected at one of the fire banks on 116th Street, and as these -- as this specialized equipment rides over the main, they look for evidence of the gas coming out, leaking out of the gas main. So at that point, they got a high reading of this tracer gas coming out, a plume being developed at that location.

Q. Okay. Which indicates what?
A. That there was a breach in the pipe.
Q. Thank you. That's what I --
A. Okay.
Q. -- I wanted to hear.

And you mentioned that you were not very much early at the site after the incident. I wanted to ask you more questions. I know you've answered some of them and though which Ravi already asked concerning what you saw, but since you came the next day, you were already there, that makes it different. Can you tell us other activities you performed while you were on site?

A. Basically, any -- I coordinated any of the operations piece: the testing of the gas main, the excavation, the removal of the gas main, the testing of the gas services, the removal of the gas services, making sure that they were properly handled and packaged, the testing, and that's about it.

Q. Okay. So what did you observe from the whole field and, you know, activity that would help in this investigation?

A. What did I observe that would help in this investigation?

Q. Yeah.

A. I guess the biggest observation was the abnormalities, in that the voids under the ground, that's very rare to see that number of voids. And the thickness of the concrete and roadway that was present in the area, that's out of the ordinary that I

observed.

Q. Okay. So based on such observations, could you have thought of the water breakage being in existence? Would that have been noticed before this incident? The water breakage, the water main breakage?

A. Would it have been noticed?

Q. Yeah, noticed.

A. Probably not if the water had -- the water tends to go down. If it had a path to go down and not up into the roadway, and then it's not uncommon to see -- to not see evidence of water at street level. Number of times we excavate and we don't notice water leakage until you actually dig down. You don't always see the water rising to the surface of a street.

Q. Okay. In your prior activities as well during this incident, how deep do you have to go to see any water in the ground?

A. Typically, 3, 4 feet. And it depends upon the area. I've worked in areas with a high water table, which is known, and it's less. Other places we can go down 12 feet and not see any evidence of water. So it really varies on the water table and the location of the water main. A lot of times the water main is on the opposite side of the street from the gas main in New York City.

Q. Okay. So at this point of the incident along Park Avenue, do you see it as an area that could have held underground

water passing through it by itself, you know, as a result of water from a water main? Do you see it as an area that could have water, actually water flowing through the --

A. Groundwater?

Q. Yes.

A. No. No, not that part of Manhattan you wouldn't see normal groundwater. It would only come from a water main. If you excavated and had evidence of water, it would probably be from a leaky water service, a water main leak, or something of that effect.

Q. Thank you. And from your job descriptions, I'm told -- you mentioned you were in pipeline planning and integrity, correct?

A. Yes, gas transmission, pipeline integrity, correct.

Q. Oh, transmission?

A. Yes.

Q. Not distribution?

A. No. No, I don't do -- the only time we overlap is in terms of public awareness. I've participated or I've given a number of presentations. We -- Con Edison's public affairs has a program where we educate public officials, community boards, and we give presentations to them, and it covers all aspects of Con Edison, not just gas. So I typically give that portion of the presentation. We do it both in New York City and up in Westchester.

Q. Okay. So as a result of your job description, in this area of the incident, were you in any form involved in the pipeline construction installations in any form?

A. Not in my present position, no.

Q. Okay. Do you work with contractors in your area?

A. No.

Q. Did --

A. Oh, yes, I do. I do have a contractor doing some ECDA work.

Q. ECDA work?

A. Yeah, external corrosion direct assessment.

Q. Okay.

A. On the transmission system.

Q. Okay. Thank you.

A. Okay.

MR. CHHATRE: Chris?

BY MR. STOLICKY:

Q. In the public awareness efforts, you said it's a general plan across the board with all commodities. Is there anything specifically you would do differently in regard to the transmission system? I mean, it may be more towards emergency responders and the public, but is there anything you do differently?

A. As part of this presentation?

Q. Um-hum.

A. It's an overall gas presentation. It covers both transmission and distribution. We talk a lot about third-party activity and contractor damage; call before you dig. We try to educate the public on that, being that third-party contractor damages are our biggest threat of concern. So that's where we focus a lot about. But it's really a general overview of the gas transmission and distribution system, all our safety programs that we perform, and it was just general conversation, presentation about those safety programs.

MR. STOLICKY: I don't have any questions regarding your experience on the site.

MR. CHHATRE: Frank?

MR. McCARTON: I'll defer to the committee. I don't have -- I'm good.

MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Lenny? Okay.

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. Just one question. When the DIMPs became effective, did you have any interaction with the people handling DIMPs versus the transmission integrity management?

A. When it became effective, I did not have pipeline integrity at the time, transmission pipeline integrity. I only received that about 2 years ago. So when it first became effective, I wasn't part of that.

Q. But when you became responsible for transmission integrity, did you have any interaction with the DIMPs people?

A. No, only in terms of public awareness.
Q. That's it?
A. That's it.
Q. Okay. So when the program was developed by Con Edison, were you consulted in the development part of the DIMPs?
A. No, I wasn't.
Q. Okay. That's all I have.
BY MR. NICHOLSON:
Q. I want to go back to the day of. I did have some follow-up questions, Tony, and I want to go to the map. Because you said you introduced the perfluorocarbon tracer gas to look for leaks?
A. Right.
Q. And I wasn't quite clear, you said you did it at one of the fire stops. Can you just point out -- we had understood from a previous interview that these squares represent the fire stops. I believe there was one there and I think he identified --
A. One here and one here.
Q. -- one here and there. Yep. So where was it introduced?
A. This one.
Q. Okay. So the main's intact at this point still?
MR. CHHATRE: But for the record, just --
MR. LETO: Yeah.
MR. CHHATRE: -- describe where --

MR. NICHOLSON: Oh, yeah.

MR. LETO: That would be west side of Park Avenue at 116th Street.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: East side.

MR. LETO: East side. East side.

MR. CHHATRE: At fire bank 2?

MR. LETO: Well, I don't see numbers on this, but, yeah.

BY MR. NICHOLSON:

Q. Okay. I'm sorry. So it was introduced there. The main's still intact at this point, right?

A. The main was isolated, the gas from the gas.

Q. Okay.

A. It is continuous from in between the three fire banks.

MR. SINGH: Other than three fire banks, no other excavations were done at that time.

MR. LETO: Correct.

BY MR. NICHOLSON:

Q. I see. Okay. And that's why you had to introduce a tracer gas through the methane. Okay.

A. Yes.

Q. And when you detected it, you detected it front of 1642. That was the only place that it came out?

A. Well, that was the largest plume.

Q. Largest plume.

A. You know, it's --

Q. Are you using a sniffer?
A. Yes, basically, the vehicles have like a sniffer-type device --
Q. Okay.
A. -- that they analyze the readings coming out.
Q. And so does the reading translate to a rate of leakage at all?
A. No, it doesn't.
Q. Okay. It's just a go/no-go --
A. Yes.
Q. -- either you got something or you don't?
A. Well, it has an intensity.
Q. Oh.
A. It does have -- it's like if you saw a graph, you have a lot of noise and then it was -- you would see --
Q. A spike or --
A. A spike.
Q. Okay.
A. Right.
Q. Okay. But that -- there's not a value associated with it? It's not --
A. No, there is no --
Q. -- parts per million or --
A. No.
Q. Okay.

BY MR. STOLICKY:

Q. Can you talk a little bit about what you did prior to running the PFT gas to ensure that there was continuity in the gas mains? I think we just mentioned that, but I don't think we discussed that process.

A. Okay. Between the three fire banks, we insert -- and before we actually tested, pressure tested the gas main, we inserted gas into one fire bank, which is the one on the east side of Park Avenue at 116th Street, and we went to the other two fire banks to ensure that air was coming out, to ensure that we had a continuous path between the three fire banks.

Q. Okay. You inserted air?

A. Air.

Q. Yeah.

A. Yeah.

Q. Right.

A. So that's what we did to ensure -- to make sure we didn't have a solid blockage at that time, so that when we did the pressure test we knew that were pressurizing from in between the three fire banks.

BY MR. NICHOLSON:

Q. Well, so there was a pressure test as well?

A. Yes, after we ensured --

Q. That's what you're saying is the air test?

A. Yes.

Q. Oh, okay.
A. Yes.
Q. All right, you're calling that a pressure test. All right. Okay. I didn't have any other questions on that.
I did want to ask you though, a little later on you talked about asphalt on the pipe, and I didn't get a clear picture of where was it on the pipe and how big are these pieces. What -- when was that, that you saw the asphalt?
A. When we were excavating in front of 1646, 1644, and 1642, in that area, there was asphalt and concrete.
Q. Like small pieces, big pieces?
A. Big pieces.
Q. Big pieces. And they were -- where were -- they were on the main or on the --
A. Yes.
Q. -- service line?
A. Yes. Everywhere.
Q. Everywhere?
A. Yes. There were big pieces over it.
Q. So was there something specifically on the T or near the service line T?
A. There was -- let me think. There was a piece of asphalt in the -- very close in the vicinity of the T and the plastic main.
Q. Did you see it removed or --

A. Yes, I was there for it.
Q. Okay. How did they remove it?
A. Carefully. They lifted up --
Q. Did they use equipment?
A. Well, it was big enough to -- I believe they had to put a sling on it and lift it up, or some of it they tried to do by hand.
Q. Did you actually see it fall?
A. No.
Q. Okay.
A. No, I did not see it fall.
MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. That's all I had. Sorry, Ravi.
MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Any follow-up questions? Go ahead.
BY MR. McCARTON:
Q. Anthony, when you say pieces of asphalt, was that the pavement you were seeing or there was pieces, individual pieces of asphalt that you saw on top of the gas main?
A. What was in the -- it was pieces that were broken away when we were excavating.
Q. Could that have been during the excavation for the building debris pile that they were moving around?
A. Possibly. I mean, I don't -- I wasn't there when the water main occurred -- when the water main break occurred, so I don't know what transpired at that time and what they needed to do in order to bring in that big crane.

BY MR. SINGH:

Q. Tony, you mentioned there was abnormal conditions where there was lots of asphalt. You know, in your career and with your time working -- you were in construction at one time, right?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you ever seen multiple layers of street or asphalt piled up and could what you described before be sections of that that fell or dropped?

A. The only time I've ever seen something like that is when the city has built a street over a street. That's the only time you really see something like that. But this was -- and really it -- then you see like a separation in between; you get the new street, the old street. But in this area, you actually saw thick asphalt in that one area in front of 1646, 44, and 1642 Park Avenue.

Q. So those large segments that Matt was referring to before, you think those could have been segments of those asphalt that somehow dislodged itself or separated itself?

A. Could be. Yes, it could be.

BY MR. GEORGELIS:

Q. Just to follow up. So, Anthony, so it was like layers of asphalt? Can you describe it like that?

A. When we excavated, the solid piece in the bank along the trench, you actually saw the asphalt being extremely thick. And if you looked closely, you can probably see -- you can almost

detect when each layer was added.

Q. And then where was that? That was the whole length of the street?

A. It wasn't the whole length. I don't -- I mean, there's pictures of it exactly. I guess it was more in the -- in front of 44, in the middle area.

Q. Was that the same condition for the service connection for 1642?

A. No.

Q. Okay.

BY MR. SINGH:

Q. So, on that note, as you excavated to expose the plastic section of the gas main and service, what type of backfill did you find around the main and services?

A. Oh, when we got down to the actual main, there was the sand.

Q. Okay. Is that typical of what Con Edison uses?

A. Yes. Sand around plastic.

MR. CHHATRE: You have a question?

BY MR. NICHOLSON:

Q. I'm sorry. When you got down to the level of the main --

A. The plastic main.

Q. -- it was sand?

A. It was evidence of sand being there.

Q. Did you excavate any deeper than that?
A. No, we only excavated enough to --
Q. To the main.
A. -- remove the facility.
Q. Okay. I thought the water line was exposed?
MR. SINGH: It was adjacent to it.
MR. NICHOLSON: It was? Okay.
MR. LETO: Yeah.
MR. NICHOLSON: Okay.
MR. SINGH: The top of it was exposed.
MR. NICHOLSON: So they didn't go deeper than 3 or 4 feet?
MR. SINGH: Yeah, at some point we did. I mean --
MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. But --
MR. SINGH: The city did.
MR. NICHOLSON: The city did?
MR. SINGH: Um-hum.
MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. Okay.
MR. CHHATRE: Okay.
MR. McCARTON: Can I ask a question?
MR. CHHATRE: Sure. Go ahead.
MR. McCARTON: Did we take pictures of that asphalt? Did we --
MR. SINGH: Yes.
MR. McCARTON: -- remove that asphalt?

MR. CHHATRE: We do have pictures.

MR. SINGH: And I think some sample --

MR. CHHATRE: There was some confusion, I think. There are two asphalt pieces, I guess, discussed. One was in the ditch. What I think Frank was referring to is on the road that you can see from the cut, the thickness of the asphalt.

MR. LETO: Right.

MR. CHHATRE: Am I correct, Frank?

MR. LETO: Tony.

MR. CHHATRE: Tony? Yeah.

MR. LETO: Yes.

MR. CHHATRE: So, Frank, what is different too is the layer of asphalt on the road.

MR. LETO: Yes, in the bank, along the trench.

MR. McCARTON: Not that was found, not that was found in the hole itself.

MR. CHHATRE: In the hole, also, there was a piece of asphalt --

MR. LETO: Right, correct.

MR. CHHATRE: -- that Frank -- or Tony is referring to.

MR. LETO: Right, yeah.

MR. CHHATRE: So Tony is referring to two different --

MR. McCARTON: Two different --

MR. LETO: Yeah.

MR. CHHATRE: -- asphalts.

MR. McCARTON: And you took samples of both those?
MR. CHHATRE: We have a sample of the one that was on the T.
MR. LETO: T, yes.
MR. CHHATRE: Not the entire one piece, just a small section.
MR. LETO: A chunk, yeah.
MR. CHHATRE: A chunk.
MR. LETO: We broke off a piece for --
MR. CHHATRE: And we have photographs of asphalt layers, a thick layer.
MR. McCARTON: All right.
MR. SINGH: I think some core samples were done also of different parts --
MR. CHHATRE: I didn't take the core sample.
MR. SINGH: Yeah, but we did, and I think we sent some results. If --
MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Yeah, these are -- but not samples.
MR. SINGH: Right.
MR. CHHATRE: Okay. No questions? Thank you very much for being here.
MR. LETO: Oh, my pleasure.
MR. CHHATRE: Off the record.
(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 Anthony Leto
DOCKET NUMBER:	DCA-14-MP-002
PLACE:	New York, New York
DATE:	August 5, 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.

_____

Shari K. Doyle
Transcriber