

## 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

\*

EXPLOSION IN HARLEM, NEW YORK

\*

MARCH 12, 2014

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Interview of: FRANK MCBRIEN

Con Edison  
 4 Irving Place  
 New York, New York

Thursday,  
 August 7, 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

RICHARD DOWNS, Survival Factors 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)

LaASIA HUNDLEY, Quality Assurance Manager  
Gas Operations  
Con Edison

ROBERT ALBANO, Esq.  
(Representative on behalf of Mr. McBrien)

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## LEGEND:

(ph.) = Phonetic Spelling

## I N T E R V I E W

MR. CHHATRE: On the record. Good afternoon. Today is Thursday, August 7, 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 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, D.C. 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 will 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 on NTSB's public docket.

Also, I'd like to inform Mr. Frank McBrien that you are permitted to have one 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 whom you have chosen to be present with you during the interview.

1           MR. McBRIEN: My name is Francis McBrien, F-r-a-n-c-i-s,  
2 M-c-B-r-i-e-n. I am the section manager of Manhattan Gas GDS and  
3 Emergency Response. My e-maill is [REDACTED]. I have  
4 chosen Bob Albano to name my representative.

5           MR. CHHATRE: Thank you. Now, I'd like to go around the  
6 room and have each person introduce themselves. Please state your  
7 name, spelling of your name, your title and organization that you  
8 represent and your business contact information, starting from my  
9 right.

10           MR. NICHOLSON: Matthew Nicholson, NTSB Investigator,  
11 spelled M-a-t-t-h-e-w, N-i-c-h-o-l-s-o-n,  
12 [REDACTED].

13           MR. DOWNS: Richard Downs, D-o-w-n-s. I'm a survival  
14 factors investigator, NTSB out of Washington, D.C. Contact info,  
15 [REDACTED]

16           MR. EMEABA: Kalu Kelly Emeaba, K-a-l-u, K-e-l-l-y,  
17 E-m-e-a-b-a. NTSB investigator. E-mail address  
18 [REDACTED].

19           MR. McCARTON: My name's Frank McCarton, Deputy  
20 Commissioner in the Office of Emergency Management. I am the NTSB  
21 party member from the City of New York on the investigation. My  
22 e-maill address is [REDACTED].

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

25           MR. SINGH: Leonard Singh, L-e-o-n-a-r-d, S-i-n-g-h.

1 Chief Engineer Gas Distribution, Con Edison, the NTSB-Con Ed pipe  
2 -- NTSB representative for Con Edison on this team.

3 [REDACTED]. And with me is --

4 MR. CHATTRE: Go ahead, introduce --

5 MS. HUNDLEY: Okay. LaAsia Hundley. It's L-a-A-s-i-a,  
6 H-u-n-d-l-e-y. I'm the quality manager for Gas Operations and I  
7 am accompanying Lenny Singh.

8 MR. STOLICKY: Chris Stolickey, S-t-o-l-i-c-k-y. I'm the  
9 New York State party rep in this investigation. I'm a utility  
10 supervisor in safety for the New York State Department of Public  
11 Service. Email address is [REDACTED].

12 MR. CHHATRE: Thank you very much.

13 INTERVIEW OF FRANK MCBRIEN

14 BY MR. CHHATRE:

15 Q. Mr. McBrien, please tell us your educational background,  
16 formal education, training with the company and your -- the level  
17 of experience and your current responsibilities.

18 A. Okay. I have a master's degree in organizational  
19 management. I have a bachelor's degree in business. I have 29  
20 years of experience in Con Edison, last 4½ years as the section  
21 manager of Gas Emergency Response GDS in Manhattan.

22 Q. So you had the same responsibilities at the time of the  
23 accident on Park Avenue. Is that correct?

24 A. Yes. Correct.

25 Q. So the section manager, tell us what your general duties

1 are, what you do on a daily basis.

2 A. I'm responsible for the oversight of the response to  
3 leaks that are called in from the public and any leaks that are  
4 called in or found by other sources. We do Public Service  
5 Commission mandated inspections such as buildings of public  
6 assembly, vaults, main valves. We also do meter exchanges,  
7 turn-ons, turn-offs of gas services.

8 Q. Okay. And do you have -- are there procedures now for  
9 all these different activities that your employees are supposed to  
10 follow or it's more like hand-on experience?

11 A. Can you repeat that?

12 Q. Yes. For these various tasks you described, like for  
13 example, meter installations or emergency response, are there  
14 standard procedures that they are required to follow?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. And how they are trained to do these tasks?

17 A. There's training. There's formal training that they get  
18 from the time they enter the company at the learning center and  
19 there's on the job training where when they come they're put with  
20 other mechanics and then there is, subsequently, on-the-job  
21 training that they get periodically throughout the year on  
22 different -- on various different tasks and any changes to  
23 specifications would be relayed to the mechanic as an OJT.

24 Q. And you and your employees participated and were  
25 involved in the incident on Park Avenue, were they not?

1           A.    Yes.

2                   MR. CHHATRE:  Thanks.  And I'll let -- hand it over to  
3 Rick Downs.

4                   MR. DOWNS:  Thank you.

5                   BY MR. DOWNS:

6           Q.    Mr. McBrien, how long have you been on the job at  
7 Conrail or Con Ed?

8           A.    Con Ed, 29 years.

9           Q.    Twenty-nine years.  Very good.  And how long have you  
10 been doing your current job?

11          A.    Four and a half; 4½, right.

12          Q.    Okay.  You mentioned your formal education.  Do you have  
13 any emergency response education or experience?

14          A.    Yes, I have ICS, Incident Command System, trained  
15 through Con Edison.

16          Q.    Is that the 2-, 3-, 400-level course --

17          A.    Yes.

18          Q.    -- do you remember?

19          A.    I'm not sure what level course it is.  It's incident  
20 commander.  I don't know what the course number actually would be.

21          Q.    And who was this offered by, do you remember?

22          A.    Con Edison.

23          Q.    So it was an in-house course rather --

24          A.    Yes.

25          Q.    -- than one that was held by FEMA or whomever.

1           A.    Right.  Correct.

2           Q.    Okay.  All right.  Now, on the date of the event, the  
3   actual event of March 12, your specific experiences you were  
4   talking about right now, can you give us a brief description of  
5   what you did that day immediately preceding the events.  Was it a  
6   normal day and everything?

7           A.    Yes, actually I reported to my office.  I get in around  
8   like 6:00, between 6:00 and 6:15.  I had a GDS managers meeting at  
9   Bruckner Boulevard, proceeded to Bruckner Boulevard and was in the  
10   middle of the meeting when I received the call of the event at  
11   116th Street.

12          Q.    So it was a routine day for you.

13          A.    A normal day.

14          Q.    Great.  Who do you report to now?

15          A.    I report to, now, Anthony Mancino.

16          Q.    Mancino.  Okay.  Good.  Okay.  When you got the call of  
17   the event, can you run through us -- for us -- run through the  
18   step-by-step, what occurred that particular day in terms of your  
19   role and your activities?

20          A.    On my way there or when I got there?

21          Q.    No.  No.  When you got the call.

22          A.    When I got the call I proceeded to -- I got the call  
23   from the Emergency Response Center.  I proceeded to call my  
24   planners to find out if they were en route.  I also spoke to one  
25   of the mechanics who was in our tool room at 110th Street to find

1 out if we had any material that we would need that we were going  
2 to be needing to material to make sure that he was by the vehicle.  
3 I proceeded to speak to other supervisors that were there that  
4 they were in route to location and then proceeded to call back the  
5 Gas Emergency Response Center to find out if it was confirmed that  
6 there was an explosion.

7 Q. Do you work out of the GERC or --

8 A. No. No.

9 Q. Okay. So any calls that you would make to your field  
10 folks, they wouldn't necessarily be recorded or anything? They  
11 would just be routine business calls or not emergency calls.

12 A. They're not -- they weren't -- I mean, if you route it  
13 through to a recorded line, no they were not. They were regular  
14 just person-to-person.

15 Q. Just regular --

16 A. Person-to-person, yeah.

17 Q. Okay. And what -- again, did you call your field  
18 planners what --

19 A. Yeah, I called the field planners to see if they were in  
20 route. Spoke to if there's supervisors going in route and people  
21 were in route to location at the time when I got the call.

22 Q. Okay. And that would be the normal protocol for you to  
23 handle an event such as this?

24 A. Since I wasn't -- since I wasn't in the office, yes,  
25 because I wasn't on location.

1 Q. In other words get them rolling --

2 A. Yeah. Yes. Yes.

3 Q. -- to the site, whatever equipment that they --

4 A. Yes. They had already been informed, though, prior to  
5 the GERC. I just wanted to ensure that they had the information,  
6 as well.

7 Q. Gotcha. Okay. In your experience, was this particular  
8 gas odor complaint call handled essentially like prior gas odor  
9 calls, nothing special here preceding the event?

10 A. Yes, same thing. It was called in and dispatched  
11 accordingly normally. Yes.

12 Q. Okay. Was there anything during this process of  
13 responding to the call that might have hindered your ability to  
14 address this particular event?

15 A. Can you repeat that question?

16 Q. Was there anything during the -- during your execution  
17 of the event, your involvement of the event that might have  
18 hindered your ability to handle the event? Did you get distracted  
19 by some other event or --

20 A. No. No. Not at all.

21 Q. Okay. Approximately how often do you receive calls or  
22 does your shop receive and process these gas odor complaint calls?

23 A. Oh, every day.

24 Q. Every day? Roughly how many times per day, a couple  
25 times per day or 10 times --

1 A. Gas calls per day?

2 Q. Right.

3 A. Probably average prior to the incident between --

4 Q. Top of your head type of --

5 A. -- 30 a day.

6 Q. About 30 a day.

7 A. In Manhattan.

8 Q. In Manhattan --

9 A. Um-hum.

10 Q. Okay. Great. And what records are compiled by you or  
11 your organization to document the activities of responding to this  
12 event? You don't have a computer system similar to the GERC --

13 A. We have -- no, I have the same -- we have the CAD system  
14 where I'm able to see mobile dispatch, the leak come in, gets  
15 assigned and maybe we'll see the same screen as the dispatcher.

16 Q. So you get the exact same material --

17 A. The same thing as -- yep.

18 Q. -- information that they get.

19 A. Yep.

20 Q. Okay. Great.

21 A. Exact same.

22 Q. Is there any manually recorded paperwork that you  
23 generate?

24 A. Well, there's -- what happens is once the leak -- once  
25 the leak is done there is a ticket generated for that to which we

1 review.

2 Q. Okay. And that's a printed ticket?

3 A. You can print it. It's electronic. You can print it  
4 out.

5 Q. You can print it out.

6 A. You can print it out.

7 Q. And is there other recorded paperwork that you generate,  
8 forms or whatever that Con Ed has?

9 A. There would be depending on the type of leak, if it was  
10 an inside leak or an outside leak. If it's an inside leak there  
11 could be tags issued. If it was outside leak it's, you know, the  
12 5013 and subsequently that would be it as far as the paperwork  
13 going for the outside leak.

14 Q. And that would be generated by your field people?

15 A. Correct.

16 Q. Okay. Was any paperwork done for this particular event?  
17 Manually by your crew?

18 A. Yes. Yes. Absolutely.

19 Q. I'd like to request for Con Ed, a copy of all his  
20 manually recorded documentation.

21 A. Oh, wait. You mean my -- no, you didn't ask that. You  
22 asked me if there was any -- the manually recorded documentation  
23 is the 5013 the mechanic made.

24 MR. DOWNS: Right. Yeah, so I'd like to request that  
25 printed.

1 MR. SINGH: Do we keep those?

2 MR. McBRIEN: The 5013 is a copy of the electronic --

3 MR. SINGH: It's the electronic with the --

4 MR. McBRIEN: It's -- he has it. They have it.

5 BY MR. DOWNS:

6 Q. Okay. My question was, was there other paperwork  
7 besides that?

8 A. No. It's the electronic copy of that. That's --

9 Q. And that's all you generate.

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay. I got that.

12 A. Correct.

13 Q. Never mind. Thank you. Okay. I got that. In terms of  
14 your particular operation, your shop --

15 A. Um-hum.

16 Q. -- are there other procedural manuals or operation  
17 manuals that you follow that you utilize in the performance of  
18 your job?

19 A. There's specifications that we use, yes.

20 Q. Is the specification in the procedure --

21 A. Yeah, the specifications.

22 Q. Okay. And is a copy readily available for you to review  
23 in the field either digitally or printed?

24 A. Yes. Yes.

25 Q. Okay. And you're well familiar with the content of this

1 and your folks are well familiar with the content of this spec?

2 A. Um-hum.

3 Q. Okay. And was it used that particular day or was it a  
4 case of your field people pretty much know it by heart?

5 A. Are you referring to leak response or emergency  
6 response?

7 Q. Right.

8 A. Referring to leak response, yes, they know that.

9 Q. Okay. Knowing what you know now given the benefit of  
10 hindsight as a lessons learned observation, is there anything that  
11 you would do differently should a future event occur such as this?

12 A. That I would have done differently as pertaining to --

13 Q. To a major event like this. Were there any lessons  
14 learned here?

15 A. There were lessons learned based on not only --

16 Q. Based upon your response to the event --

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. -- in retrospect, in hindsight, would you do anything  
19 different should a future event occur?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Can you elaborate a little bit --

22 A. Yes. I think --

23 Q. -- for us on that, lessons learned --

24 A. Yes. Lessons learned were I think that our -- for  
25 people there should be some type of emergency lights and sirens

1 for our vehicles designated for our people to respond to leaks for  
2 people -- additional responders, coordination with the city to  
3 route traffic in order to get more personnel into the area and  
4 basically coordinate where we have to be with the city agencies.

5 Q. Okay. Yeah, we can go offline and coordinate with the  
6 fire department maybe on certain topics like that later on.

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. Okay. Let's see, we got that covered. Did you report  
9 to the site itself or was that later in the afternoon by the --

10 A. I reported to the site. I was there roughly I'd say a  
11 little after 10:30, 10:30-ish, around there.

12 Q. Do you have any involvement with the closure of the  
13 valves or anything in that particular area to shut the gas off?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay. Could you elaborate for us a little bit as to  
16 what that involves?

17 A. Turning off the gas of the mains or services or --

18 Q. The mains and/or services.

19 A. Yeah, well, I -- at the time that that happened I was  
20 the incident commander. When I arrived on location and became  
21 incident commander we began to excavate fire banks in which we  
22 would -- had a plan to stop off the flow of gas through the use of  
23 stoppers in the main and we began to shut down buildings through  
24 the curb valves that we actually could access where there wasn't a  
25 debris field.

1           Q.    Okay.  Got that.  Got that.  And do you have anything to  
2 do with establishing Con Ed policy regarding the technical  
3 considerations of either remotely-controlled operating valves,  
4 shutoff valves or the installation of manual shutoff valves in  
5 their system?

6           A.    Can you repeat that one more time, please?

7           Q.    Do you have anything to do with the operational policy,  
8 Con Ed's policy of installation of either remotely-controlled  
9 valves or manually-controlled valves?

10          A.    No.  I can recommend it.  I don't have --

11          Q.    Just recommend it.  You don't actually have a decision  
12 process?

13          A.    No, it would be based on -- engineering would be the --

14          Q.    Engineering.  Okay.  Let's see, do you have any  
15 involvement regarding the calls -- public calls to the Con Ed  
16 customer service versus 91 versus -- 911 versus 311?  Nothing to  
17 do with that?

18          A.    No.  Nothing.

19          Q.    Okay.  All right.  Got that.  Got that.  Got that.  We  
20 had a Brian Morgan.  Does he work for your shop?

21          A.    Yes, he does.

22          Q.    Okay.  We had a radio call between him and the GERC  
23 folks in the field.  Let me -- here it is.  He apparently was a  
24 field guy who was going to some other job.

25          A.    Yes.

1           Q.    With a pickup truck so he didn't have a regular service  
2   truck.  He didn't have all the tools that were normally fitted to  
3   that.  He self-diverted -- he became aware in some manner of the  
4   event itself and diverted over to the site and he was involved a  
5   lot with that process.  Your folks in training, do you take care  
6   of the training in your shop for that particular role for that  
7   particular person?

8           A.    I don't know what you mean by the training for that  
9   person.

10          Q.    Do you have specialized training for your personnel or  
11   do they just go -- undergo the standard Con Ed --

12          A.    They get -- the training for each person, depending on  
13   their title, is -- it depends on their title and it's given out by  
14   the training group and administered by either the learning center,  
15   depending on the title of the person, and we get notified if they  
16   need training.  If we need -- they send us an e-mail or some  
17   proper notification saying that that person is due for training,  
18   coming due for training.

19          Q.    And were all of your people, to your best knowledge,  
20   trained to their required level at the time of the event?

21          A.    I believe so.

22          Q.    You believe so.  Okay.  Very good.

23                MR. DOWNS:  All right.  Got that.  Got that.  Okay.  I  
24   think I've got everything at the moment --

25                MR. CHHATRE:  Okay.

1 MR. DOWNS: -- Mr. Chhatre.

2 MR. CHHATRE: Kelly?

3 BY MR. EMEABA:

4 Q. Yes, one of your responsibilities you mentioned public  
5 assembly response. Can you elaborate more on that area of public  
6 assembly?

7 A. It's a building of public assembly. It's defined by New  
8 York City is a building of public assembly which could house 75  
9 people or more that is open to the public, meaning a restaurant,  
10 it also includes schools, nursing homes, hospitals, things of that  
11 nature that 75 people or more can go to and we go and do an  
12 inspection on that. It doesn't necessarily mean -- it doesn't  
13 mean a building with 400 apartments. That is not a building of  
14 public assembly.

15 Q. Okay. So --

16 A. If the apartment building have a open meeting room or  
17 party room that they rent out to people that holds over 75 or  
18 more, that is -- then that would make that a building of public  
19 assembly.

20 Q. Okay. So when that is the case what special urgency do  
21 you assign to that?

22 A. It's -- it's got a PSC-mandated inspection that has to  
23 be done within every year not to exceed 15 months and basically  
24 you're looking to ensure that the curb valve is accessible, gas-  
25 free, and that the curb valve is accessible, should there be an

1 incident you'd be able to shut the gas off from the outside.

2 Q. Okay. If you said a hall that can arrange for meetings  
3 or parties. Doesn't a church qualify as a --

4 A. Church is one of them, yes, absolutely. Church is one  
5 of them.

6 Q. So being the case in 1644, the people have -- why were  
7 there not critical or a manual valve installed in that area that  
8 virtually cut off gas supply in case there's an incident?

9 A. There is. There was. The curb valve.

10 Q. You actually had to cut the pipe and blocked from the  
11 curb valve.

12 A. Because the curb valve was covered by debris.

13 Q. Yes, because it's inaccessible at the time of incident.

14 A. Right.

15 Q. So in a situation like that where you cannot access  
16 assess the curb valve, are there other critical valve nearby or  
17 junction valve that were in place that could have been shut off to  
18 cut off that block or nearby instead of cutting, which took you 3  
19 hours?

20 A. On that system on that day, no there was not -- there  
21 were no other additional valves in the area that would isolate  
22 that one block. No.

23 Q. Yeah, so -- and you know there's a place of public  
24 assembly which is a church.

25 A. Yes.

1           Q.    Okay.  Do you have valves, currently, other than the  
2   curb valve in facilities around even this same neighborhood that  
3   could be used to handle such incident if they ever occur that  
4   would involve --

5           A.    Some, yes.  Not all.

6           Q.    Okay.  Have your company considered it as something they  
7   need to do?

8           A.    Not that I'm aware of.  Valve installation?

9           Q.    Yes.  Valve installation.

10          A.    Valve installation is one of the things that are  
11   considered.  I don't know if it's pertaining to POPA areas.  I  
12   don't know if that's a criteria.

13          Q.    Okay.  So at least from what you stated it is suspected  
14   that such valves need to installed somewhere?

15          A.    No, I didn't say that.

16          Q.    Okay.  Shouldn't there not be installed somewhere?

17          A.    No, I didn't say that.

18          Q.    Okay.

19          A.    I was saying that the valve is there.  The valve is  
20   inspected.  However --

21          Q.    Which is the curb valve.

22          A.    The curb valve which --

23          Q.    Which was closed out during the incident.

24          A.    Right.

25          Q.    So in this -- put it this way.  What other criteria, if

1 you can call it a second, a backup valve, do you have to be shut  
2 off in such incidents where you have a place of public --

3 A. It would be --

4 Q. -- assembly --

5 A. It would be a -- it would be a main valve. And that one  
6 -- at that time there was no main valve in that block.

7 Q. Okay. And that is the question I asked, does the  
8 company has such provisions now for other similar locations?

9 A. There's main valves in other areas, yes. There are main  
10 valves in other areas but if, like I said before, it doesn't  
11 necessarily pertain to POPAs.

12 Q. How are your emergency responders trained to respond  
13 differently in the incident you have at Park Avenue different from  
14 their normal routine leak investigations?

15 A. None. Every leak is responded to the exact same way.  
16 Every leak is responded to the exact same way. Once -- if once  
17 that person goes to that location and says, you know, the building  
18 is down or there's been an explosion then additional criteria  
19 comes into place. The ICS system goes into place.

20 Q. Do you also think it will be necessary if there is a  
21 call in the case of inside gas leak and probable or outside gas  
22 leak to send two mechanics at the same time instead of one?

23 A. No.

24 Q. Do you consider the time lag for an individual to  
25 investigate them both if the situation had been -- is suspected to

1 be a hazardous condition?

2 A. Every leak is a suspect to be a hazardous condition.

3 Q. Every leak is hazardous condition.

4 A. Every leak is expected to be. If you're calling in a  
5 gas leak we treat it as a hazardous condition because we don't  
6 know what we're responding to. So we respond to it with the same  
7 urgency as any other leak calls treated the exact same.

8 Q. Is that according to your procedure?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Is it written in your procedure?

11 A. What is written in my procedures?

12 Q. That every leak is a hazardous condition.

13 A. Every leak -- I don't -- every leak is treated the same  
14 way and responded to the same way.

15 Q. Correct, but is that written in your procedure for leak  
16 emergency responders to know that and (indiscernible) or yourself  
17 to know it and is that assumed --

18 A. I actually don't understand what you're asking me.  
19 You're asking me is the leak responded to the same way? Yes.  
20 Every leak is responded to is treated as leak. Hazard -- are you  
21 saying like a more hazardous leak? I don't understand what you're  
22 asking.

23 Q. I know you have classes of leaks.

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. And under emergency response, and it could be -- as

1 we've learned from this process, questions comes is it a faint  
2 smell or a strong smell, things like that. As a result both the  
3 dispatcher and those involved can categorize it as, well, it's  
4 light, wherein in that situation you ask your customer to open the  
5 window. Correct?

6 A. The time is when someone calls in and it is -- it's  
7 called in as a reliable source, a code MuRRE or something of that  
8 effect. That is, we have a greater response going to a code MuRRE  
9 because it has been determined by reliable sources, New York City  
10 Fire Department, an employee, that this is a -- confirmed that  
11 there is a leak there or there is a reasonable belief that it is a  
12 strong leak there, so we send it code MuRRE. So we'll send our  
13 mechanic along with the fire department if the fire department is  
14 not there on a code MuRRE.

15 Q. Okay.

16 MR. SINGH: Can I --

17 MR. CHHATRE: Off the record.

18 (Off the record.)

19 (On the record.)

20 MR. CHHATRE: Back on the record.

21 MR. DOWNS: Did the question get sufficiently answered,  
22 asked and answered?

23 MR. EMEABA: Yes, it sounds fine. Thank you. I'm all  
24 right for now.

25 MR. CHHATRE: You done?

1 MR. EMEABA: For now, yes.

2 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Chris?

3 MR. STOLICKY: I'm all set.

4 MR. CHHATRE: Frank?

5 MR. McCARTON: I'm good.

6 MS. HUNDLEY: I'm good, thank you.

7 BY MR. CHHATRE:

8 Q. Just a couple more questions.

9 A. Sure.

10 Q. A couple of -- I guess, five citizens told during in the  
11 interview that they called 311 for gas odor for whatever reason.  
12 Have you guys done any follow-up on that? Why would people call  
13 311 or the -- we were told that some people called 311 for gas  
14 odor. We haven't verified it yet, but that's what we were told.

15 A. I personally wouldn't have followed-up with a 311 call.

16 Q. You would not even know. Right?

17 A. No, I wouldn't have -- I wouldn't know.

18 MR. SINGH: Ravi, off the record for a second.

19 MR. CHHATRE: Off the record.

20 (Off the record.)

21 (On the record.)

22 MR. CHHATRE: Back on the record.

23 BY MR. CHHATRE:

24 Q. Are you planning on making any changes in your response  
25 procedure based on the new initiative that we just saw in the

1 newspaper and also some information that the party rep said to us  
2 about people being asked to call 911 along with calling Con Edison  
3 with a gas odor?

4 A. So I would find -- if they call 911, I would get the  
5 call then. My people would get the call.

6 Q. Through 911?

7 A. The call would go 911 to the GERC and then it would be  
8 dispatched to me.

9 Q. Come to you.

10 A. That's -- so I would still get it the same way.

11 Q. You would still get it the same way.

12 MR. SINGH: So off the record for a second.

13 (Off the record.)

14 (On the record.)

15 MR. CHHATRE: Back on the record. I have no more  
16 questions for you, so I'll go one more round.

17 MR. DOWNS: Okay. Another round.

18 MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

19 BY MR. DOWNS: Just to make sure I'm clear on this,  
20 Mr. McBrien. You are the supervisor of your gas distribution  
21 services personnel; that's your field technicians or mechanics?

22 A. I'm the manager.

23 Q. You're the manager.

24 A. Okay.

25 Q. Okay. Do you have any management oversight of the GERC

1 facility at all?

2 A. None.

3 Q. No. So that's a separate manager.

4 A. Correct.

5 Q. Who would that be, do you know?

6 A. The manager that would be Victor DiDarrio (ph.).

7 Q. Victor DiDarrio. Okay. Thank you.

8 Last, I always give the witnesses an opportunity, as  
9 this may be the last question, is there anything, meaning do you  
10 have any thoughts or factual observations, that wasn't mentioned  
11 here today that you would like to add to your testimony, add to  
12 the record any final closing thoughts?

13 A. No. I don't have anything.

14 Q. We good?

15 A. Good.

16 MR. DOWNS: Okay.

17 MR. CHHATRE: Matt?

18 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

19 Q. I just was curious on -- I'm not sure I understand this  
20 GERC is separate from your department.

21 A. So what happens -- what I'm is, I'm Manhattan gas, so I  
22 have Manhattan gas -- I'm the manager of the Manhattan distribution  
23 and emergency response.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. The GERC has -- is the Gas Emergency Response Center for

1 the entire system: Westchester, Bronx, Queens and Manhattan.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. So when the leaks get called in, they go through the  
4 GERC and then there's dispatchers that dispatch them the required  
5 -- to the areas that that the leak is called in. So if you called  
6 in a leak at 116 Park --

7 Q. The dispatchers are dispatching your people?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay. All right. But aside from the emergency stuff  
10 you're also doing -- do you do day-to-day stuff like leak surveys  
11 or --

12 A. Yes. That's all done in-house with -- that's backup  
13 work.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. The leaks are priority. So the backup work is given --  
16 the inspections, the non-emergency work is given out by the  
17 supervisors who are on the shift to the mechanics so they have  
18 work available to them when they're not working leaks.

19 Q. Supervisors that --

20 A. That report to me, yes.

21 Q. Okay. So GERC work orders or calls take precedence over  
22 all the other stuff.

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Okay. And then leak survey information, how does that  
25 get entered into the system?

1       A.    So leak survey is out there doing leak survey.  They  
2   stop.  They get a leak.  They call it in to the GERC that they  
3   have a leak and then they work -- they're trained -- they can work  
4   it.

5       Q.    Okay.

6       A.    They can work it.

7       Q.    So any leak that's called into GERC or --

8       A.    By leak survey?

9       Q.    Yeah.

10      A.    Leak survey is doing outside leaks.  Inside leaks don't  
11   -- leak survey doesn't do inside leaks.

12      Q.    Okay.  I thought I just heard you say the leak survey  
13   stuff gets transferred into --

14      A.    Yes, it goes to GERC.  Out -- you were saying all  
15   leaks --

16      Q.    Well, I know there's grade --

17      A.    Yeah, yeah, yeah.  So -- but the outside leaks, leaks  
18   that are outside that are not -- you don't smell gas in your  
19   stove, like say you say I smell gas in my stove, that wouldn't be  
20   leak survey.  That would be somebody calling in --

21      Q.    No, I understand.

22      A.    Okay.

23      Q.    I'm talking about the actual leak survey.

24      A.    Yes, leaks --

25      Q.    Your mobile survey.

1 A. Yeah, mobile survey calls in says I have a leak.

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. They then notify the GERC and the GERC gives them --  
4 assign them a number to that leak. And that they -- they're going  
5 to work the leak and until they have --

6 Q. So do they put a grade on it or --

7 A. Yeah, they class it --

8 MR. SINGH: They give it a ticket.

9 MR. McBRIEN: They generate a ticket.

10 BY MR. NICHOLSON:

11 Q. But it's inside the GERC system.

12 A. No, no, no, no, no. No, no.

13 Q. I'm -- I got lost then. Sorry.

14 A. All right. So leak survey is separate, also.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. So leak survey is out and they're surveying the system.

17 Q. Um-hum.

18 A. And they're on the block and they get a reading on the  
19 machine, they get out and they investigate.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. During that investigation if there is readings found and  
22 it's a grade of a leak, they can classify that leak --

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. -- and they're calling it into the GERC.

25 Q. Okay.

1           A.    If it is a severe enough leak where it's a grade type 1  
2   leak, they will call and say we need a crew.  We have a type 1  
3   leak and they will -- the GERC then will call in and say we need a  
4   construction crew to respond.

5           Q.    Okay.

6           A.    And the leak survey will be there until the construction  
7   crew arrives.

8           Q.    They'll stay right at the site --

9           A.    Yes.

10          Q.    -- to make sure they show up.

11          A.    Yes.  Yes.

12          Q.    Now if a -- what if it's a grade 2 leak?

13          A.    Well, grade 2 it's the same thing.

14          Q.    Okay.

15          A.    It can be classified, it doesn't need immediate  
16   response.  Same thing with a class 3.

17          Q.    Okay.  So it still gets called to the GERC.

18          A.    Yeah.

19          Q.    GERC won't dispatch necessarily on a grade 2.

20          A.    Correct.

21          Q.    Okay.  So all leaks are captured through this GERC.

22          A.    Yeah, they get assigned a ticket.  They're assigned a  
23   ticket.

24          Q.    Okay.  All right.  So you see both through this GERC  
25   system; not only do you see call-ins from the public, you will see

1 what was found on the mobile --

2 A. Oh, yeah. You can see the inside leaks and the outside,  
3 right.

4 Q. So they can actually compare it at some point, hey, I'm  
5 getting phone calls from the public and leak survey found --

6 A. Oh, absolutely. Absolutely, you can see what leak  
7 survey has for the day and what came in from the public, from  
8 in --

9 MR. NICHOLSON: Okay. Thanks. Yeah. That clarifies  
10 it. Thank you.

11 MR. CHHATRE: Any follow-up questions? Kelly?

12 MR. EMEABA: Question. Matt talking about about leak  
13 survey, the leak survey you are talking about is emergency  
14 response leak survey. Correct?

15 MR. McBRIEN: No. The program survey. The programs are  
16 -- the normal patrol --

17 MR. EMEABA: (Indiscernible?)

18 MR. McBRIEN: The normal patrol, yes. The normal  
19 patrol.

20 MR. EMEABA: Are you the one in charge of that, too?

21 MR. McBRIEN: No, I am not.

22 MR. EMEABA: Okay. So I rest my question to the next  
23 person.

24 BY MR. DOWNS:

25 Q. I've got a quick follow-up. Differential between --

1 what's the difference between your field mechanics and your field  
2 planners? What's the different role of each?

3 A. So the mechanic is qualified for whether it's  
4 construction, GDS, it's either -- there's different grades of  
5 mechanics, B, A, Lead and based on that they're able to do their  
6 criteria or operate a qualification what they can do.

7 There's supervisor and then there's planner. The  
8 planner plans the work for the area so he's getting together the  
9 backup work for the guys so in the morning 10 mechanics come in.  
10 He's having the work assigned to the 10 mechanics, the backup work  
11 so that they're working prior to anything coming in from the GERC.

12 Q. I see so it's kind of a (indiscernible) role or a  
13 support role.

14 A. Yeah, he's supporting but he's also -- goes out into the  
15 field and see, you know, works with them in the field, as well.

16 Q. And a field planner would be given a series of  
17 assignments at the beginning of the day to work at job A, B, C  
18 whatever.

19 A. No, the planner is a management person. He's a  
20 management person. He's assigning the leaks, he can see on the  
21 system what needs to be done in regard to what's planned  
22 turn-ons, so forth like that, and he assigns it to the mechanics  
23 who are going to be in that geographic area.

24 Q. I see. So the field mechanics will be going about their  
25 routine addressing --

1           A.    Yep.

2           Q.    -- the system turn-ons, turn-offs, whatever, and then,  
3 correct me if I'm wrong, they get an alert from the GERC. We got  
4 a leak response. They divert immediately --

5           A.    Correct.

6           Q.    -- to that location and address it as needed.

7           A.    Correct.

8           Q.    Okay. And the field planner may or may not respond to  
9 the site.

10          A.    Right he may not be -- he may not be -- if the -- if the  
11 mechanic is there and says he wants to see the planner or a  
12 supervisor, then they would be diverted.

13          Q.    You mean requesting depending upon the degree of --

14          A.    Well, like if the person needs a hand with something.  
15 They may need a second person to give them a hand pulling a  
16 manhole or whatever.

17          Q.    Okay. So it wouldn't be standard protocol for a planner  
18 to be dispatched to a site --

19          A.    No.

20          Q.    -- unless it was a big deal.

21          A.    Right.

22          Q.    Great. And in this particular case it became obvious it  
23 was a big deal because this planner we're talking about was on to  
24 another job, monitored the situation and diverted to the  
25 particular site.

1           A.    Are you referring to Brian Morgan?  
2           Q.    Yes.  
3           A.    No, Brian Morgan is a mechanic.  
4           Q.    He's a mechanic.  
5           A.    Yes.  
6           Q.    It's got him listed here as a lead.  
7           A.    He's a lead mechanic, yeah.  
8           Q.    Lead mechanic.  
9           A.    Lead mechanic.  
10          Q.    I see.  So he's not a planner.  
11          A.    No.  He's a union personnel.  
12          Q.    Okay.  I mistakenly noted he was a planner here.  
13          A.    No.  
14          Q.    Okay.  But he works for your shop.  
15          A.    Yes.  
16          MR. DOWNS:  Okay.  I'm good.  Thank you.  
17          MR. CHHATRE:  Okay?  Frank?  
18          MR. McCARTON:  I'm good.  
19          MR. CHHATRE:  Okay.  Kelly?  
20          MR. EMEABA:  I'm all right.  
21          BY MR. STOLICKY:  
22          Q.    Did you say you went to the site around 10:30?  
23          A.    I believe, give or take.  I was in the Bronx and --  
24          Q.    Can you describe what you saw when you pulled up on  
25          site?

1           A.    I saw the smoke.  I saw a tremendous amount of emergency  
2   apparatus and I saw my people.  I saw the people set up and I went  
3   to go over there and find out what was going on and who was there  
4   and try to assess the situation what was going on.

5           Q.    Did you smell any gas?

6           A.    When I first arrived, no.

7           Q.    Did you see any -- did you see the water main break at  
8   that time?  I mean, we know the water main broke at some point.  
9   Did you see it at that time?

10          A.    When I first got there?  No.  Not when I first got  
11   there, no.  I keep -- when I first got there I didn't actually go  
12   over there because the ICS system was in command and they made me  
13   the white hat, so my role is to stay by the incident command with  
14   the the fire department and everybody else, so I did not go over  
15   to the excavation when I first got there, no.

16          Q.    Okay.  And when you say you oversee the leak survey,  
17   does that include the winter survey, the high speed --

18          A.    No.  No.  I oversee surveys that my people do.  You've  
19   got to realize there's this leak survey group and then my group  
20   does the surveys which is post-milling of streets, parade routes,  
21   those type of things, follow-up.  We don't do the program surveys.  
22   We do --

23          Q.    Who's in charge of that?

24          A.    That would be --

25               MR. SINGH:  Alan Boyd.

1 MR. McBRIEN: Alan Boyd, yes.

2 MR. EMEABA: You call him what?

3 MR. SINGH: Alan Boyd.

4 MR. McBRIEN: Alan Boyd.

5 MR. SINGH: The next two people that come in work for  
6 him.

7 MR. STOLICKY: All right. I'm all set.

8 BY MR. DOWNS:

9 Q. One quick thought. Did you actually do any supervision  
10 when you were on the site or you just allowed your guys, your  
11 planners to handle it step by step?

12 A. Oh, no. No, I went -- I did some -- I worked hand-in-  
13 hand with Mr. Kelly here a lot.

14 Q. Okay. So, I mean, when you first arrived at about 10:30  
15 they were attempting to locate places to do --

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Were you working with them and supervising them  
18 directly or --

19 A. Yeah, they were reporting back to me. I didn't -- I was  
20 over at the command center and they were going through their  
21 supervisor reporting back to me the situation that they had  
22 (indiscernible) --

23 Q. So it was a report back --

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. -- rather than you actually being out there saying dig

1 here, that kind of thing?

2 A. Right. We looked at the maps and said where we were  
3 going to dig here and told the supervisors dig the holes here and  
4 that's what -- how we did that.

5 MR. DOWNS: Okay. We're good. Thank you.

6 MR. CHHATRE: Lenny?

7 MR. SINGH: Chris got to my question.

8 MR. CHHATRE: Yeah, he got to my question also.

9 MR. SINGH: Yeah. Right.

10 MR. CHHATRE: I'll -- just another question for you.

11 MR. SINGH: I'm sorry. I just wanted to clarify. On  
12 the roles, if you look at the org charts you submitted, there's an  
13 explanation of what a field planner does and what a supervisor  
14 does and what a section manager does.

15 MR. DOWNS: Okay. We don't have names on there, so it's  
16 hard to tell the players.

17 MR. SINGH: Yeah, but there's description of the titles  
18 and what they mean.

19 MR. DOWNS: I'm just associating names with titles at  
20 this point.

21 BY MR. CHHATRE:

22 Q. I think at some point you said you get 20 calls, up to  
23 30 calls per day on a gas odor complaint?

24 A. Gas calls. Gas calls, yes.

25 Q. Okay.

1           A.    That's just Manhattan.

2           Q.    Correct.  Correct.  How many of those are really gas  
3 odor compared to (indiscernible) problem, something like that?

4           A.    It depends on the day.  That number varies all the  
5 time.

6           Q.    I was curious to find out, do you guys keep some kind of  
7 a statistic that says, well, I sent my mechanic at 20 locations.  
8 Out of those only four really are gas odor, everything else was  
9 really could not find any leak at all?

10           MR. SINGH:  Yes.

11           MR. McBRIEN:  Yeah, yeah.

12           MR. SINGH:  And Jerry had those (indiscernible) that'll  
13 tell you of the incoming calls how many materialized to leaks and  
14 how many materialized to nothing, yes.  I think it's 40 percent.

15           MR. STOLICKY:  Well, based on meetings we've had with  
16 Con Ed, it generally runs around 40 percent is --

17           MR. CHHATRE:  I mean, either you can send me that  
18 (indiscernible) send me something later saying this is what our  
19 statistics show.

20           MR. SINGH:  How far back?  How much?

21           MR. CHHATRE:  I'll just -- why don't go -- well, go 5  
22 years.

23           MR. SINGH:  Five years?

24           MR. CHHATRE:  Yeah.  And I'll be quite happy even if you  
25 send me a simple (indiscernible).

1           MR. SINGH: I'll give you a nice graph and chart, with  
2 numbers on it.

3           MR. CHHATRE: I want a (indiscernible) graph and not  
4 a (indiscernible) --

5           MR. SINGH: I got you. I got you.

6           MR. CHHATRE: I just want to make sure that we don't get  
7 something wrong here. So I want an actual graph.

8           MR. NICHOLSON: All right. Are we done?

9           MR. CHHATRE: Yeah, I think I'm done. I don't know --

10          MR. SINGH: I'm done.

11          MR. CHHATRE: Okay. If not, thank you so much for  
12 coming in.

13          MR. MCBRIEN: Thank you very much.

14          MR. CHHATRE: Off the record.

15          (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 Frank McBrien

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.

---

Beverly A. Lano  
Transcriber