UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:	*	
	*	
FATAL NATURAL GAS EXPLOSION	*	
IN SOUTH JORDAN, UTAH	*	Accident No.: PLD25FR001
ON NOVEMBER 6, 2024	*	
	*	

Interview of: [redacted], Fire Captain
South Jordan Fire Department

South Jordan, Utah

Monday,
November 11, 2024

APPEARANCES:

SCOTT LAVALLE, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

REID HESS, Region Manager
Enbridge Gas Utah

CHRIS DAWSON, Fire Chief
South Jordan Fire Department

JACOB JORGENSEN, Accident Investigator
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration

REED THOMPSON, Deputy State Fire Marshal
Utah State Fire Marshal's Office

I N D E X

ITEM	PAGE
Interview of [redacted]	
By Mr. Lavallee	5
By Mr. Hess	15
By Mr. Dawson	15
By Mr. Thompson	16
By Mr. Lavallee	18
By Mr. Dawson	21
By Mr. Thompson	22
By Mr. Lavallee	24

I N T E R V I E W

MR. LAVALLEE: My name is Scott Lavallee, and I am the NTSB emergency response group chair for this incident. We're conducting an interview today on November the 11th, 2024, with Captain [redacted] who works for the South Jordan Fire Department.

This interview is in conjunction with NTSB's investigation of the incident in South Jordan, Utah. The NTSB accident reference number is PLD25FR001. The purpose of the investigation is to increase safety, not to assign fault, blame or liability.

Before we begin our interview and questions, let's go around the room and introduce ourselves. State your name and title, spell your last name. I'll start off and pass it to my right.

Again, my name is Scott Lavallee, L-a-v-a-l-l-e-e, and I am the NTSB group chair for emergency response for this accident.

MR. HESS: Reid Hess, H-e-s-s. I work for Dominion, excuse me, Enbridge Gas, and I am the region manager in the western division.

MR. [redacted]: [redacted], fire captain for South Jordan Fire Department.

MR. DAWSON: Chris Dawson, D-a-w-s-o-n. I'm the fire chief, South Jordan Fire Department.

MR. JORGENSEN: Jacob Jorgensen, accident investigator for the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration. Last name, Jorgensen, J-o-r-g-e-n-s-e-n.

MR. THOMPSON: I'm Reed Thompson. I'm a deputy state fire marshal with the Utah State Fire Marshall's office, T-h-o-m-p-s-o-n.

MR. LAVALLEE: Okay. Captain [redacted], do we have your permission to record our discussion with you today?

MR. [redacted]: Yes.

MR. LAVALLEE: Do you understand that the transcripts will be part of the public docket and, as such, we can't guarantee any confidentiality?

MR. [redacted]: Yes.

MR. LAVALLEE: And Captain [redacted], we also allow you the opportunity to have a representative with you for the interview. Do you choose to have a representative with you today?

MR. [redacted]: No.

MR. LAVALLEE: Okay, thank you.

INTERVIEW OF [redacted]

BY MR. LAVALLE:

Q. All right. So, first questions that I have, Captain [redacted], are going to be basic background questions. If you could for the investigative panel here, please describe your career within fire services up until this point, please?

A. Sure. Right out of high school, did three years of wild land firefighting and from there, got hired on with South Jordan Fire Department, 2008. Worked my way through the ranks of senior firefighter, firefighter engineer, fire captain.

Took a year leave of absence to do ministry duties. Returned to the department as a senior firefighter, advanced EMT. From there, worked back up through and promoted up to fire captain again.

And I've also done part-time fire department work for about 8 years total at Bluffdale Fire Department and fulfilled different roles there.

Q. Thank you for that. And with your fire service career, I would ask, do you hold any certifications issued by the state or other agencies?

A. Yes.

Q. Could you describe those certifications?

A. I have all certifications required and necessary to be a firefighter I and to hazmat awareness and operations.

I have fire company officer investigator and also any type of officer I. I have any type of certifications that would qualify me to become a captain.

Q. Those certifications that you just mentioned, are those State of Utah certifications, or are they specific to an agency?

A. They are State of Utah.

Q. State of Utah, thank you. The date of the incident which I show as November the 6th, can you describe your shift that day, when did you start up to, like, when did you receive notification of the event?

A. Well, the shift, we were doing some normal activities as far

as business inspections just kind of day-to-day operations, working on crew evaluations, and got the notification through the tones, got the call out through the station for an explosion call.
Q. And not to interrupt but to the best of your recollection, approximately what time was that?
A. Roughly 3:30.
Q. Thank you. Please continue.
A. So, we got the call for an explosion at a house. At that point, we went ahead and did a normal house fire response as far as putting on our turnouts, preparing to respond, looking at the map and preparing to essentially fight fire and kind of had that in our mindset.
Q. Looking at the map, does the equipment have any sort of navigation system to help you get to an address that you enter, or is it all just based off maps?
A. Yeah, so we have a navigation system. I use our map that displays the location of the incident. I'm able to navigate personally fairly well just being in Station 62's area for several years. The map that we have automatically pulls up the location of the incident, and I was able to navigate us to the call.
Q. And what equipment was dispatched from the station on that day at that time?
A. From what I remember, I know for sure it was Medic Engine 62 and Medic Ambulance 62.
Q. Based off the initial notification of an explosion/fire,

would that equipment have been the appropriate equipment for that sort of call?

A. Yes. With it being in our first (indiscernible) area, absolutely.

Q. Was there any other stations --

(Alarm.)

BY MR. LAVALLEE:

Q. Were there any other stations sent to respond at that same time that you're aware of?

A. Yes. Don't know exactly which ones were dispatched right off the bat. I just know that several fire units and a couple battalion chiefs were dispatched indicating that it was a fire response.

Q. Fair enough. And with the group that you responded with, could you give an estimate of total number of firefighter personnel that were dispatched at that time with you?

A. With us?

Q. Yes.

A. So, we had five at our station and then if you're looking for the whole assignment, is that correct?

Q. Just your station.

A. Yeah, we had five that day.

Q. Okay, thank you.

A. Also, a paramedic student riding in our ambulance as well.

Q. All right. Thank you for that.

A. Sure.

MR. LAVALLEE: That's all I've got for this round. I'm going to pass it to my right to Reid from Enbridge.

MR. HESS: Nothing at this point, thanks, [redacted].

MR. DAWSON: Nothing yet.

MR. LAVALLEE: Okay.

BY MR. LAVALLEE:

Q. Going further, and I can't remember if I asked this, I certainly didn't make a note on it, what time would you recollect arriving on scene? We do have records, but this is just your best recollection.

A. So, I'd roughly give us 4 to 5 minutes from tone out to arriving. Again, if we're just ballparking, if it was 3:30 or 4:00, just 5 minutes past that.

Q. With an estimated response time of 5 minutes as you're describing, based upon where the station is to the residence of the incident, would that response time in your estimation be appropriate, is that long, short, is that about average?

A. I think we had a pretty good response time. I think it was appropriate.

Q. Okay. Describe to me once you're getting into the neighborhood of the incident what you've seen, what you saw?

A. Okay. When we hit, and not familiar with the streets or whatnot, I'll just off of my description of the streets, when we were heading east on South Jordan Parkway about River Heights

Drive, which was the cross street, that's when we noticed a black column of smoke.

So, as we were heading towards the call, obviously, we knew something was burning and probably was good in size based on the smoke reading that.

We took a right on 32nd West and right when we turned right on 32nd in the distance, I saw several bystanders on both sides of the road in the sidewalk areas.

From what I remember, as we got closer to actually turning into the neighborhood, and I couldn't tell you exactly what the items were, I just noticed a lot of debris in the road on the park strip in the sidewalk area and, again, the smoke was kind of banked down at that point, just blowing across 32nd.

Q. So, just point of clarification, Captain, if I may for someone who might not be familiar with street numbering grids within the Salt Lake Valley, would 32nd West and 3200 West, would those be synonymous?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay, thank you. Please continue.

A. We noticed a lot of, I noticed a lot of people right off the bat, noticed the debris that I had mentioned.

From there, we turned into the neighborhood and took our initial left to be on the street of the incident. From there, of course, we drove up, we saw a fire hydrant; that's something that we were trying to find right away.

And then as we approached, obviously, we saw the house that was on fire, lots of smoke, a lot of fire. We saw a lot of glass in the road that had shattered, and we made the decision to drive over that to get to our incident location.

From there, noticed a lot of debris surrounding the area in the front yard across the street and noticed that the back side of the house appeared to be missing and that the front walls were still standing but leaning towards the center of the home.

Again, several people out on both sides of the street just -- those are the main things that I noticed.

Q. While you were driving to scene or while enroute to scene and you saw the things that you've just described, did anything that you saw prompt you to start additional resources to the scene?

A. Yes. So, when I did my arrival report, I explained that we had arrived, I explained what he had, I explained that we needed a second alarm, a full second alarm is what I requested and so I got that additional batch of units coming.

Q. What specifically regarding a second alarm, what additional resources would that provide you with?

A. I believe three engines, another ladder truck, another ambulance, battalion chief.

Q. Is it common place or perhaps even policy or procedure to assess the scene even while traveling towards it to kind of get a better idea of what that scene might be when you get there, or what additional resources you may need by the time you arrive?

A. Yes. Obviously, we saw the smoke. Battalion Chief [redacted], as he was responding, had enquired more from dispatch as far as if there was an explosion, if any type of law enforcement was on scene.

Those circumstances and details were not certain from my understanding as we were driving. From that point, he requested two additional engines to get started right away.

So, with the knowledge of two additional engines on top of our first alarm assignment, I did not request any other units at that point. And then when I arrived, seeing what we had, that's when I requested the full second alarm.

Q. Copy that, thank you. So, you stated that this initial call was for an explosion/house fire, was it immediately apparent that this would be related to natural gas?

A. No.

Q. As your initial efforts on scene began, can you describe what those initial actions were once arriving on scene, please?

A. Sure. Would you like mine and my crews, or just mine?

Q. I would say, let's get the crew since I believe that you performed your duties in a supervisory capacity for your crew, is that correct?

A. Yes.

Q. Then for the crew would be fine.

A. Okay. Yeah, so I'll just, working my way through just as it relates to my crew and what I assigned, did my best to get a 360

and a view of at least three sides of the structure.

So, from that point, seeing that there was a lot of fire, unstable walls and that a large portion of the house was basically not standing, I already had talked to my engineer on the way. He knew already that he needed to get a water supply because we had discussed getting a hydrant at least while we were enroute to the scene. So, his first priority was getting water supply so hooking up the hydrant to the engine and connecting to that fire hydrant.

From there, I told my firefighter to grab a two and a half inch pre-connect and begin defensive operations so, essentially, I assigned her to pull the two and a half.

Q. And just point of clarification for those who may read the transcript, you referred to a two and a half pre-connect, can you describe what exactly that is?

A. Sure. Pre-connect hose is already connected to the piping of the engine so that it's a quick deployment, and you can get water to the hose and to the nozzle quickly.

Q. Would that pre-connect be fed by an onboard tank to the engine, or would you need to hook to the fire hydrant first to provide water?

A. You could start spraying with the on-tank water and get it started but knowing the gallons per minute that that nozzle and that line would be providing and producing then quickly after that, you'd need a water supply.

Q. In your best recollection, was there any delay in

establishing the connection to the hydrant system?
A. From what I understand, no. There was some distance between the hydrant and the engine so as far as time taken to pull the five-inch line to the hydrant, that takes time inherently, but there was no unnecessary delay from my understanding.
Q. So, would it be correct to say that you experienced no operational delay in getting it hooked to the hydrant system?
A. Correct.
Q. Thank you. Upon arrival and after your assessment and the initial actions that you described, was there any report to you or your crew that your aware of, of potential victims within the structure?
A. That information was not given to me personally while I was on scene. It was my understanding that that information was passed on to Battalion Chief [redacted].
Q. Upon Chief [redacted]'s arrival or prior to, are you aware?
A. After his arrival is what I would suspect. I do not know for sure.
Q. Thank you for that. Once your initial actions began, were you at any point during those, during the firefighting action, did you have evidence, anecdotal or otherwise, to believe that this was caused due to a natural gas incident?
A. No. There was nothing that as I looked at it pointed out or gave me direct evidence personally that this was a natural gas incident.

Q. Was it clear that it was, in fact, an explosion?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. With having an apparent explosion, does that change the way, the safety procedures that the fire department uses to attack the remaining fire?
A. Yes, and for this one, we went defensive. That was basically stayed away and out of the structure and spray it from the outside to keep a safety barrier.

MR. LAVALLEE: Thank you for that. I'm going to allow the opportunity to pass it around one more time. Reid from Enbridge?

MR. HESS: Yes, one question. So, you've stated it a couple of times that at the time you didn't know whether natural gas was involved, do you recall smelling any natural gas odor, odors while you were on scene?

MR. [redacted]: I did not recall smelling any of that.

MR. HESS: Thanks.

MR. LAVALLEE: Just a reminder as I do pass around, please state your name and spell, please state your name and your title.

MR. HESS: My apologies. Hess, H-e-s-s.

MR. LAVALLEE: Thank you. I'll continue, pass it around.

MR. DAWSON: Yeah, Chris Dawson, South Jordan Fire Department. With regard to establishing the water supply, did your engineer establish that by himself, or was he assisted in --

MR. [redacted]: It sounds like he was assisted by another crew that was on board so he had started it and then there was some

assistance as far as getting that connected.

BY MR. THOMPSON:

Q. A couple of questions, and this is Reed Thompson. When you first arrived, Captain [redacted], you indicated that you had smoke and flames, correct?

A. Correct.

Q. Okay. Where was the larger portion and fire body coming from, can you maybe describe what you recall seeing?

A. Sure. Upon arrival, I can just see that there was a large amount of fire and smoke coming from behind the Alpha side walls, so the front of the house, the walls that were on the front leaning towards the center of the home.

From doing a partial 360, it was pretty apparent that the flames were coming essentially from the center of the home from the large rubble pile at that point.

Q. Okay. Approximate flame height?

A. Flames were probably 20 to 30 feet.

Q. And then can you, you described smoke. Originally, you had mentioned coming in that you had a black column coming in as you were enroute.

A. Yes.

Q. Color changes, anything there as far as maybe describe the smoke conditions as well.

A. From what I observed, the color didn't change from the smoke until we started applying water. Obviously, we started getting

whiter, white smoke, steam, mixed in at that point. But from what I could tell, it was black the entire time.

Q. Did you have any, did it appear in any way that you had anything else feeding the fire? We've talked a little bit about natural gas, did it appear like things reacted differently when you applied water or your crew applied water, anything that you could add there?

A. Yeah, so as the incident progressed and I was now assigned to fire attack on the back with my firefighter, I did notice at one point in the basement, applying water to a rubble pile that was burning, that as we applied water, there seemed to be a few almost like, I don't even know how to describe it, just a few little minor pops and then it kind of flared up a little bit, and put more water on it, flared up a little bit and then it went out.

Q. Okay. Do you have any idea what you think that may have been relevant to?

A. I do not.

Q. With household items potentially in the home as well, is it possible it could be battery-powered equipment, things of that nature?

A. I think it's possible. Again, the fire eventually went out so I don't know if something's feeding that or if it was some sort of battery or something like that.

MR. THOMPSON: Okay. I think that's good for this bit at this time.

MR. LAVALLEE: Okay. I'll probably just have one or two more and then we'll go around one last time to make sure we're all set up. This is Lavallee from NTSB one more time.

BY MR. LAVALLEE:

Q. So, you had shared with us that upon arrival at the scene that there was not an odor associated with natural gas, is that correct?

A. Correct.

Q. At any point during your time on scene, did that odor associated with natural gas, did that come to you at any point during your time on scene?

A. No. The main odor I smelt was smoke.

Q. So, based on your testimony here today, we knew and it was evident, it was reported and it was also evident that an explosion of some kind happened, but not immediately apparent what that cause, what the cause of that explosion would have been, is that fair to say?

A. Correct.

Q. During your time on scene, did anyone in your crew or anyone that was there that you're aware of, anecdotally or otherwise, were there any injuries sustained by any of the South Jordan Fire Department or other mutual aid fire departments that were there, if any?

A. Not to my knowledge.

Q. Appreciate that. Can you describe the incident command setup

that would eventually form at the scene, how that works, who filled that role and what their responsibilities were as you understand them?

A. Sure. I initiated incident command. I took Glenmoor command, always assign a name to it here. So, upon my arrival report describing what we had, what we needed, I took command being the first unit on scene.

After doing a walk around to see what we had, Chief [redacted] walked up at that point. I let him know what my next plan of action was. At that point, he said that he would assume command.

Q. Not to interrupt but roughly, do you have a recollection of what time the incident command responsibility would have been transferred over?

A. It would have been within a couple of minutes of arriving.

Q. So, not very long?

A. No.

Q. At any point during your time, either through incident command or as a fire professional working the scene, did you make contact with utility workers of any kind, be they natural gas, power, electric, water, anything of that nature?

A. There was brief interaction, it was just saying hello in passing. I definitely saw that there were, what appeared to be gas workers on scene.

Q. Okay. In addition to gas workers, did you notice workers that you perceived to be from any other utility there?

A. Honestly, there was several people there wearing different types of construction clothing, and it was hard to decipher if it was the gas company or from any other utility company.
Q. That's fair enough.
A. Sure.
Q. Were any of the utility workers, regardless of who they worked for, or perceived utility workers that you saw on scene, were any of them in the way or impeding the firefighting activities in any way, shape or form?
A. Not that I saw.
Q. You mentioned just brief hello or greetings or things like that, at any point, did you have to tell any perceived utility worker wearing a hi-vis vest or anything, did you have to move them back from the scene in any way?
A. No.
Q. However, and I don't want to put words in your mouth so I'm going to ask you this, during your brief time as incident command before that responsibility was passed on, did you have any command, incident command responsibility sort of conversations with anybody from any utility?
A. No.
Q. Okay. I just want to be clear on this, would that be because of how brief your role as incident commander was in your estimation?
A. Correct, yeah. And the goal was try to assign my crew

members, figure out a plan and go from there.

Q. Once that incident command shifted away from your responsibility, were there any continued communication from the units in command that had been established regarding natural gas of any kind, was there any discussion of gas on the scene, you know, operationally through incident command or otherwise?

A. There wasn't specific communication in the first initial minutes as we transferred that command. I think it was probably, just understanding the job, there was an understanding that that may be part of the cause, I think just based on the understanding of our expertise in the job.

But as far as specifics, that was not communicated right off the bat.

Q. Would the knowledge that natural gas may have been involved in the event, would the knowledge that it was involved, may have been involved during the initial event, would that have changed anything about the way you and those on your crew were directed to perform their duties?

A. No.

MR. LAVALLEE: Pass around one more time just to make sure we don't have any follow-up questions. To my right, Reid Hess.

MR. HESS: Reid Hess, Enbridge Gas. None right now.

MR. DAWSON: Chris Dawson, South Jordan Fire Department. Obviously, you had a lot of things going on, on the initial operation, were any evacuations done initially from neighboring

homes?

MR. [redacted]: I don't know.

MR. DAWSON: Okay. That's all I got.

MR. THOMPSON: Reed Thomspon, State Fire Marshal's Office.

BY MR. THOMPSON:

Q. Captain [redacted], you mentioned a lot of bystanders as you were arriving on 3200, was it the same situation in the case on 3210 in front of the home?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. Did you have to use a command presence to get anybody back, or what did you experience in that respect?

A. I personally did not have to at that point.

Q. Would you say there were people on the property, or were they all in the street, what do you recall from that respect?

A. From what I recall, there wasn't anybody on the property itself.

Q. No one in the home that you saw, or anybody approaching the home?

A. No.

Q. So, no active rescue efforts by any bystanders to your recollection?

A. Correct.

Q. Okay. You mentioned catching three sides or a better part of a 360 on your initial assessment, did you catch utilities on your way through there, or maybe describe what you did or didn't do in

that respect?
A. Yeah, I did not catch utilities. The area on the side of the house where the gas meter was, which I later saw, there was quite a bit of debris that was in the way, from what I remember.
Q. And how about electric or power?
A. No. I did not catch that.
Q. Okay. Do you recall anything overhead, any overhead issues or anything like that?
A. The only thing I saw was the leaning walls on the front of the home and then, initially, there was that Delta wall that was leaning as well so I stayed away from the walls and didn't try to get close to it for that reason.
Q. After we had assessed the property at a later time, it was discovered we had some damage to the home to the north which is identified as 10583, did you take any actions relevant to that structure, or was your focus primarily on the explosion home?
A. While I was in command, the main focus was the home of the incident.
Q. And then once command was transferred to Chief [redacted], what was your next assignment?
A. He assigned me to join up with my firefighter and assist with defensive fire tech.
Q. Were you the group supervisor then at that point?
A. Essentially. Yeah, it wasn't assigned necessarily or verbalized, but we were the first and only attack line for several

minutes before Charlie division was assigned.

MR. THOMPSON: Okay. I think that's it.

MR. LAVALLEE: Just a couple.

BY MR. LAVALLEE:

Q. To the best of your recollection, Captain, what time do you recall the fire being what would be considered under control?

A. I'd say probably about 15 minutes or so.

Q. Were you and when were you made aware of a potential victim within the structure?

A. I had heard that there was possibly somebody inside after our first assignment on attack.

Q. Roughly how long into you being on scene would that have been to the best of your recollection?

A. Probably 20 minutes or so.

Q. With the information that there may be, may have been someone inside the structure at the time, did that change how your group at the time being assigned to the attack, you know, in the attack role, did that change any procedures or any tasks that you were performing at that time?

A. No.

Q. It would have remained the same, firefighting in and of itself?

A. Correct.

Q. Thank you. Based upon your knowledge of the event, when did you become aware that there was, in fact, a victim in the home?

A. That there was in fact?
Q. Yes.
A. It had to have been, well, I think the status kind of remained, once I had heard that there was a potential victim that the status somewhat remained uncertain. It was trying to assess, okay, just so everyone knows, there is a potential victim inside.
Q. Sure. At any point during time on scene would there have been a shift from a rescue-type operation to more of a recovery-type operation and, if so, when do you perceive that to have been?
A. I don't believe that there was necessarily a shift, like, every -- from fire attack because of the layers of rubble, it was literally start moving piece by piece to cool hot spots and also try to access any area of the home where there might be a victim.

So, that's also kind of following background from the last question, that's why we wouldn't have changed because we were trying to cool hot spots while removing hot materials and potentially trying to access any type of, you know, basically get to different points where it was just piles of rubble.

I don't think there was necessarily a shift. There was an ongoing understanding that we need to fight fire, cool hot spots and get rid of the materials that were piled up in order to provide access in case there was somebody there.
Q. Understood, thank you for that.
A. Sure.

Q. All right. Well, we have your contact information, Captain, would you mind if we do form additional questions that we reach out to you for those?

A. That's fine.

Q. We've asked you a lot of questions today. At this point, I'd like to just ask you if you have anything you'd like to share with us regarding this incident?

A. Nothing beyond the questions that I answered. I think they were pretty straight forward as far as our operational tactics and our purpose and mission on scene. Yeah, I have nothing else to share right now.

Q. With the knowledge of who was there regarding your department or otherwise, would there be anyone else that you suggest this panel of enquiry reach out to?

A. Not at this time.

MR. LAVALLEE: I appreciate that. On behalf of the NTSB, Captain [redacted], I'd like to thank you for your time and know that we do appreciate you coming in today to speak with us.

MR. [redacted]: Yeah, thank you.

MR. LAVALLEE: On behalf of the NTSB, thank you very much for your time and cooperation. That's the end of our interview.

MR. [redacted]: Thank you.

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:	FATAL NATURAL GAS EXPLOSION IN SOUTH JORDAN, UTAH ON NOVEMBER 6, 2024 Interview of [redacted]
ACCIDENT NO.:	PLD25FR001
PLACE:	South Jordan, Utah
DATE:	November 11, 2024

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.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Transcriber