

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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THE EXPLOSION OF APARTMENT  
BUILDING 8701 OF FLOWER BRANCH  
APARTMENTS IN SILVER SPRING,  
MARYLAND ON AUGUST 10, 2016

Accident No.: DCA16FP003

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Interview of: EDUARDO HILDAGO

Pine Ridge Apartments  
8617 Piney Branch Road  
Silver Spring, Maryland

Saturday,  
August 27, 2016

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: RAVI CHHATRE  
Investigator-in-Charge

## APPEARANCES:

RAVI CHHATRE, Investigator-in-Charge  
National Transportation Safety Board

RACHAEL GUNARATNAM, Hazmat Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board  
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KALU KELLY EMEABA, Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board  
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STEVE PRICE, Division Head of Systems Operations  
Washington Gas  
Tel: [REDACTED]  
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JOHN CLEMENTSON, Assistant Chief Engineer  
State of Maryland Public Service Commission  
Tel: [REDACTED]

LT. WILLIAM OLIN, Fire and Explosives Investigator  
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MARK PALMER, Esq.  
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(On behalf of Kay Management Company and Mr. Hidalgo)

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>I N D E X</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Eduardo Hildago:		
By Mr. Chhatre		5
By Ms. Gunaratnam		18
By Mr. Price		20
By Mr. Chhatre		23
By Mr. Price		25
By Mr. Chhatre		26
By Mr. Price		26
By Lt. Olin		28
By Mr. Emeaba		30
By Mr. Chhatre		35
By Ms. Gunaratnam		36

I N T E R V I E W

1  
2 MR. CHHATRE: On the record. Good afternoon.

3 MR. HILDAGO: Good afternoon.

4 MS. GUNARATNAM: Today is Saturday, August 27th, 2016. We  
5 are currently at Pine Ridge Apartments, located at 8617 Piney  
6 Branch Road, Silver Spring, Maryland. We are meeting regarding  
7 the investigation of explosion of building 8701 Flower Branch  
8 Apartments, Silver Spring, Maryland, that occurred on August 10th,  
9 2016.

10 My name is Ravi Chhatre. I'm with National Transportation  
11 Safety Board located in Washington, D.C., and I am investigator in  
12 charge of this accident. The NTSB investigation number for this  
13 accident is DCA16FP003.

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

19 Also, I would like to inform Eduardo Hidalgo that you are  
20 permitted to have one other person present with you during the  
21 interview. This is a person of your choice -- your supervisor,  
22 friend, family member -- or, if you choose, no one at all.

23 Please state for the record your full name, spelling of your  
24 name, organization you work for, and your title, business contact  
25 information such as mailing address, and whom you have chosen to

1 be present with you during your interview.

2 MR. HILDAGO: My name is Eduardo Hildago; E-d-u-a-r-d-o,  
3 H-i-d-a-l-g-o. I am working for Kay Management. I am the  
4 engineer over here. I'm living on [REDACTED]  
5 Spring, Maryland.

6 MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

7 MR. HILDAGO: And then I choose him to be present.

8 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Okay. Now I would like to go around the  
9 room and have each person introduce themselves. Please state your  
10 name, spelling of your name, your title, and the organization that  
11 you represent, and your business contact information. Starting  
12 from my left.

13 MS. GUNARATNAM: Rachael Gunaratnam; R-a-c-h-a-e-l,  
14 G-u-n-a-r-a-t-n-a-m. Hazmat investigator with the NTSB. Phone  
15 number: [REDACTED].

16 MR. CLEMENTSTON: John Clementson, Assistant Chief Engineer,  
17 Maryland Public Service Commission. [REDACTED].

18 MR. PRICE: Good morning. Steve Price, Division Head of  
19 System Operations at Washington Gas. [REDACTED]. And my email  
20 is [REDACTED].

21 LT. OLIN: Lieutenant William Olin, fire and explosives  
22 investigator for Montgomery County, Maryland. Phone number: [REDACTED]  
23 [REDACTED]. Email: [REDACTED],  
24 [REDACTED].

25 MR. PALMER: Mark Palmer, M-a-r-k, P-a-l-m-e-r, attorney on

1 behalf of Kay Management Company. Phone number: [REDACTED].

2 Email: [REDACTED].

3 MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

4 MR. EMEABA: Kalu Kelly Emeaba; K-a-l-u, K-e-l-l-y,  
5 E-m-e-a-b-a. I'm an NTSB investigator. Phone number: [REDACTED]-  
6 [REDACTED].

7 MR. CHHATRE: Thank you very much.

8 INTERVIEW OF EDUARDO HILDAGO

9 BY MR. CHHATRE:

10 Q. Mr. Hildago, just for the record, just tell us your -- any  
11 formal education, any training, any experience on the current job,  
12 how long you have been with Kay.

13 A. I have 3 months with Kay. I have 3 months with Kay. I got  
14 some classes for air conditioning and heating, boiler, electrician  
15 and basic plumbing.

16 Q. Okay. And any previous experience related to your current  
17 job?

18 A. No.

19 Q. No? Okay. So 3 months meaning roughly you started in April  
20 or May?

21 A. May.

22 Q. May? Okay.

23 A. May 2nd or May 3rd.

24 Q. Okay. This year, 2016?

25 A. This year, yes.

1 Q. Okay. And with your job as engineer, what do you do  
2 typically on a day?

3 A. In the day, every Monday check all the hot water heaters and  
4 the alarm system in the building. And then I do air conditioning  
5 and heating repair. And sometimes I come in for regular tickets,  
6 too. Sometimes I come in for regular tickets like plumbing or,  
7 you know -- but most of the time I do air conditioning and  
8 heating.

9 Q. Okay. So what do you -- you say every Monday you check water  
10 heaters?

11 A. Yeah. And the alarm system.

12 Q. Alarm systems.

13 A. Uh-huh.

14 Q. So what is it that you check for the water heaters?

15 A. I go to the laundry room to see if I can smell any gas or we  
16 have any leak of the water pipe, or I check to see if the hot  
17 water heater is working properly.

18 Q. And how do you do that?

19 A. I go to the room and then I check to see I get any gas smell  
20 or I see the pipe to see if they got any leak. And then I stay  
21 for like 10 or 15 minutes to see the sequences for the hot water  
22 heater to coming on and coming off.

23 Q. Coming on and coming off.

24 A. Uh-huh.

25 Q. Do you set the temperature in the water heater?

1 A. They got the thermostat in there, so the temperature is set.

2 Q. But you don't adjust that?

3 A. No.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. We just see the temperature but I don't physical push  
6 something to check. But they -- all the hot water heaters, they  
7 got the thermostat.

8 Q. So do you remember when you checked 8701 water heater?

9 A. That was on Monday. I went to the room, because in that room  
10 we have air conditioner units. Check the units to see if they  
11 still -- whatever we left them the last time. And then as -- what  
12 I see as to see it's not got any water leak or gas leak, and stay  
13 there to see the sequences to see how the hot water heater  
14 working.

15 Q. So Monday will be -- do you remember the date? Which date  
16 was it on?

17 A. I have to check my -- the 8th.

18 Q. The 8th? Do you remember what time?

19 A. It was like probably around 9:30, 10:00 in the morning.

20 Q. In the morning. Okay. And have you been in that room since  
21 then?

22 A. No.

23 Q. Okay. And tell me what did you find on Monday the 8th. Did  
24 you see water heater working properly?

25 A. Yes. Everything is -- it was working properly. No water



1 leak, no gas leak on that day.

2 Q. Okay. Do you remember how old the water heater was?

3 A. Probably -- it not look that old. And then I hear they  
4 replaced it like a year or 2 years ago.

5 Q. A year or 2 years ago?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. Now in that particular room do you know where the ventilation  
8 was, how the outside air could come in?

9 A. I know they got two windows.

10 Q. Two windows.

11 A. Yeah. It's two windows on this side. I believe one has  
12 little holes, one window. It's covered with piece of wood, but  
13 they make a little -- three holes in there.

14 Q. Some kind of concrete or glass or what? What was that window  
15 like? I mean, the window is destroyed so that's why I'm asking  
16 you.

17 A. I believe one had like a piece of wood, with a -- one window  
18 had like a piece of wood cover, like a window glass but it's a  
19 wood.

20 Q. Oh, wood. Okay. It's a wood. Okay.

21 A. Uh-huh. So they drilled some holes, I believe one --

22 Q. In the wood?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. So I guess one it was like that. And the other one, I guess,

1 it was glass.

2 Q. Piece of glass.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. Was it closed or it's open, or --

5 A. That have to be closed. It's closed.

6 Q. That's closed.

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. So only maybe one window with the holes?

9 A. Yeah. I remember two windows on that side. So one had holes  
10 and the other one regular glass.

11 Q. Right. But the regular glass you said it was closed.

12 A. Yeah. It was closed.

13 Q. So for ventilation you only have one window?

14 A. Yeah. Uh-huh.

15 Q. With holes in it?

16 A. Yeah. Uh-huh.

17 Q. Okay. Do you smell any damp smell? Any --

18 A. No.

19 Q. When you go into that room, do you check for oxygen? If  
20 there is enough oxygen for you, when you go in there.

21 A. No, we don't check for oxygen. But we go in there, if we  
22 smell something, and then we try to get the gas detector or  
23 whatever we thinking is the odor, you know.

24 Q. Do you keep the door open when you are inside that room or  
25 you keep the door closed?

1 A. When we go in there, the door is open.

2 Q. So you keep it open?

3 A. When I am inside. But when I come out, we close it.

4 Q. But when you go in and you are doing some work in that room,  
5 do you keep the door open?

6 A. Yeah, I put something to leave it open.

7 Q. So door is open?

8 A. Yes. It stay open, maybe, like 10 minutes or 15 minutes.  
9 Whatever time I'm inside, and then when I come out I close it.

10 Q. So when you go in on -- when you went in on Monday, did you  
11 feel nauseated? Giddy? Did you feel that you're not getting  
12 enough air?

13 A. No. It was normal --

14 Q. Was not feeling that.

15 A. -- like every time when I go in.

16 Q. And did the water heater come on and off for your cycles,  
17 that you saw?

18 A. Yeah. It was working normally.

19 Q. It was working normally.

20 A. Uh-huh. Actually, we -- and this month, that -- the hot  
21 water heater never going off, like, for hot water. In these 3  
22 months, everything, always they was working fine.

23 Q. So with your 3 months, you never had any problem with that  
24 water heater?

25 A. No.

1 Q. No water heater problems.

2 A. Not on that day, and neither building 03. Because my shop  
3 was on building 03.

4 Q. Okay. So, you are responsible for all water heaters in the  
5 entire complex, or just those two buildings?

6 A. No, the whole --

7 Q. Entire complex?

8 A. Uh-huh.

9 Q. And so how many people help you on your job? How many other  
10 engineers working here?

11 A. Well, they --

12 Q. Besides you.

13 A. Well, to check the water heaters only me.

14 Q. Oh, water heaters on you.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. Strictly on you.

17 A. That, that -- it's strictly me.

18 Q. Now have you seen any water heater problems? Not 8701, but  
19 any other building, that they're not firing up properly?

20 A. Only one. I believe that was building 8660.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Or 62, I believe, building.

23 Q. 8662?

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. And what happened there?

1 A. That was a standing pilot hot water heater. Then the  
2 resident called because they don't have no hot water.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. So we just tried to light it on, but after a minute it's  
5 keeping cutted off. So we call API to do the repair on that one.

6 Q. And do you know what happened? What did they do?

7 A. I don't know what exactly they do, but they came to replace  
8 something. After that, we don't got no more calls on that water  
9 heater.

10 Q. Okay. But that has a standard pilot?

11 A. Right. That one, the was the one I was telling you, it was a  
12 standing pilot.

13 Q. So 8701 and 8703, were they electronic ignition?

14 A. Electronic ignition, both.

15 Q. Okay. So you actually -- in your checkup, you wait there  
16 till the gas flow starts coming in and then --

17 A. Yeah. When the flame open --

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. -- and then when the flame coming off. And then you go under  
20 to see -- when it's a standing pilot, to see the pilot is on. The  
21 other one, the electronic, I don't have to see that because it  
22 working different.

23 Q. Okay. And how many of these, I guess, gas pilot water  
24 heaters do you have?

25 A. Not too many. I don't know how many. Several, but not too

1 many.

2 Q. Okay. But, I mean, do you have any rough idea? It looks  
3 like you are the only person who knows the water heaters, that's  
4 why I'm asking you.

5 A. Yeah. Yeah.

6 Q. Do you have any estimate? Like 2 -- 1, 2, 3, 10?

7 A. Probably -- I guess no more than three, I guess.

8 Q. No more than three.

9 A. Actually.

10 Q. And how many total water heaters do you have in this complex?

11 A. We have one on each building.

12 Q. So that means --

13 A. It's like -- we got probably like 26 buildings, I believe, so  
14 have to be like 26.

15 Q. Twenty-six water heaters. And about roughly three are pilot.

16 A. Probably. Yeah. I --

17 Q. Everything else is electronic?

18 A. Yeah, most -- I know, I know most are electronic.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. But 8701, 8703 were definitely electronic?

22 A. I'm pretty sure of those, they are electronic.

23 Q. Okay. Okay. Now do you know a gentleman named Melty  
24 Castillo? Was he working when you came in?

25 A. No.

1 Q. He was not? Okay. What about Mr. Diaz -- D-i-a-s, I  
2 believe. You didn't know him?

3 A. No.

4 Q. You didn't know him?

5 A. I know Rafael, Leonel.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Romel, and the --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- and the two grounds person.

10 Q. Now when you come into going into the basement, do you have  
11 to use key or electronic key or what, what do you -- how do you  
12 get into the basement? Are they open all the time, the doors?

13 A. Well, the building door is secure. We have to use a key for  
14 going into the building. But in the laundry, it's open but we got  
15 a gate in the hot water heater. I have a key for that.

16 Q. You have a key for that?

17 A. Uh-huh.

18 Q. So all water heaters are in a gate?

19 A. Uh-huh. Yes.

20 Q. Okay. But the laundry room remains open all the time?

21 A. Eight to 8.

22 Q. Eight to 8.

23 A. They open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

24 Q. And how does it get locked at 8 p.m.?

25 A. The grounds person open it and the grounds person close.

1 Q. Oh, grounds person? There is -- what -- so somebody else --

2 A. From the company. We call it ground person. The  
3 (indiscernible) guys. They come to open it at 8, and then they  
4 come at nighttime 8 p.m. to close it.

5 Q. So they have the key for the laundry room?

6 A. Yeah. All the maintenance have the key for the laundry room,  
7 and the two grounds person too.

8 Q. And two grounds person?

9 A. Yeah. Because the two grounds person, the one opening and  
10 close the laundry room.

11 Q. For all buildings? All 26 buildings?

12 A. Correct.

13 Q. So are they divided as to somebody comes in the mornings,  
14 somebody comes in the evening? Or they divide the number of  
15 buildings?

16 A. I believe they take it -- one day take one, the other day  
17 take the other one.

18 Q. And do they live on the property?

19 A. One living on this -- I believe this building, or close to it  
20 here. And the other one live like, maybe like 20 minutes from  
21 here. I --

22 Q. So do they have to come also for 8701 to lock that door or  
23 they don't go to 8701?

24 A. No, because we don't have no laundry in there.

25 Q. So they don't go to 8701?



1 A. No.

2 Q. And they don't have a key to go to 8701?

3 A. They do, because sometimes they have to go to that room, but  
4 they have a key for that room.

5 Q. Okay. And do you know the names of those two people?

6 A. Jaime, Jaime and Gabriel.

7 Q. Hi?

8 A. Jaime.

9 Q. How you spell it?

10 A. Like Jamie.

11 Q. Oh, Jimmy?

12 A. Jimmy. Uh-huh.

13 Q. Okay. Jimmy and who?

14 A. Gabriel.

15 Q. Gabriel.

16 A. Uh-huh.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. But we call him Jaime. So that --

19 Q. Oh, you call him Jaime. Okay.

20 A. Yeah.

21 MR. CHHATRE: All right. Okay. Okay. That's all I have.

22 Thank you so much.

23 MR. HILDAGO: No problem.

24 MS. GUNARATNAM: I just had a few.

25 MR. CHHATRE: Identify yourself.

1 MS. GUNARATNAM: Oh, Rachael, from NTSB.

2 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

3 Q. You said the last time you were in the room was that Monday,  
4 August 8th.

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Do you remember anyone going in after you? Like on the day  
7 of the accident or on the 9th or on the 8th, as well? Anyone  
8 else --

9 A. On that time, I don't see nobody. But probably the other co-  
10 worker maybe can go because we have so much stuff in there, to get  
11 it. You know, like some Spray Nine to cleaning, you know.

12 Q. Right. Do you ever have to use -- well, if there's a gas  
13 leak, if someone complains about a gas leak or smell of gas, what  
14 do you do, you know?

15 A. As soon as we got a report for gas smell, we grab the gas  
16 detector and we take the gas -- the detector with me, and go to  
17 check to see where is it leaking from, you know.

18 Q. Do you, do you just check the room where you got the  
19 complaint from, or how do you check?

20 A. It's depend. If I feel it's only one room is coming the  
21 smell, I shut it off at -- whatever the part is leaking, I shut it  
22 off the gas box. And then if I come out and the detector is still  
23 beeping, I go to the next apartment.

24 Q. Do you recall any -- smelling any gas in that room, in the  
25 gas meter room?

1 A. No.

2 Q. In any apartments?

3 A. 8662, I believe. They called one time while I was working on  
4 emergency call. We have to work on Saturday. They call one  
5 Saturday for a gas smell, but when I checked it was one vacant  
6 apartment they put wax on the floor and that was the problem.

7 Q. Okay. Do you ever interact with Washington Gas when they  
8 come?

9 A. No.

10 Q. No? So do you -- when you started working for Kay, did they  
11 give you any gas, natural gas training or --

12 A. No. Because we not allowed to replace any stove or touch  
13 anything from the laundry level line, and the meters, we don't do.  
14 We just go inside the apartment to try to find out where is the  
15 leak. If we find out where is the leak, cut it off. Either  
16 depending what it is, you have to call API.

17 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. Okay. That's it.

18 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. John?

19 MR. CLEMENTSON: No questions.

20 BY MR. PRICE:

21 Q. Good morning. As you've been in 8701 --

22 MR. CHHATRE: Please identify.

23 MR. PRICE: Oh, sorry. Steve, Price, Washington Gas.

24 BY MR. PRICE:

25 Q. You've been in the storage room at 8701 and described that.

1 But what is stored in there? What was stored in there on that  
2 Monday?

3 A. What we store in there?

4 Q. Yes.

5 A. We had some air condition -- brand-new air conditioner,  
6 furnace and coil.

7 Q. I'm sorry?

8 A. Coil, for the air conditioner.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. All those are new ones. We keep it in there. And then I  
11 know they usually -- we had the toilet paper and -- but they can  
12 tell you more on that probably -- I mean, (indiscernible) can tell  
13 you what exactly more they keeping in that room. Because only  
14 keeping eyes on the air conditioner unit.

15 Q. Are there --

16 A. And the gas tank, you know.

17 Q. Say that again.

18 A. When I go to that room, I check the air conditioners and the  
19 hot water tank, you know. That -- when I go most of the time, to  
20 that room.

21 Q. In 8701?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. What air conditioners are you checking?

24 A. No, the ones we have -- we store in there, you know. To see  
25 if there still the number amount we left from last week to this

1 week.

2 Q. How many are in there?

3 A. It was like eight furnace, like three condenser units,  
4 between seven to eight coils.

5 Q. And you said there were like eight furnace? Is that what you  
6 said?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. In the storage room of 8701?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. On the Monday that you went in?

11 A. Uh-huh.

12 Q. How did those units get there?

13 A. How?

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. We got delivery from Goodman Appliances. So they brought it  
16 over here and then when they deliver, we told it to set up in that  
17 room.

18 Q. So these are new units?

19 A. Yes. Brand new.

20 Q. In their boxes?

21 A. In their boxes, yeah.

22 Q. And the delivery service takes them into that storage room  
23 using a handcart or something?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. So as you walk into that storage room, would I be correct in

1 that the water heater is directly in front of you?

2 A. Yeah. Close to the wall.

3 Q. Close to the right wall, as you walk in?

4 A. Uh-huh.

5 Q. And where are these air conditioning units stored?

6 A. They're stored in like, maybe like 2 or 3 feet before to the  
7 hot water heater.

8 Q. In front of -- between you and the water heater?

9 A. Yes. Between --

10 Q. As you walk -- as you're standing in the door?

11 A. Yeah. If you stand in the door, when you go to the hot water  
12 heater probably you have like 2 or 3 feet to going through and  
13 then the other side where the water heater is clear.

14 Q. Okay. The other side, meaning the side --

15 A. Where the -- because the hot water heater is close to the  
16 wall. But this side is clear, so we -- the hot water heater is  
17 over here, as far as like 2 or 3 feet.

18 BY MR. CHHATRE:

19 Q. This is Ravi. You want to draw a sketch to show us that  
20 room? Where is what.

21 A. Okay. This is the doorway.

22 Q. Is that pen working?

23 A. Yeah. Yeah. Like I say, this is the wall. You can say the  
24 hot water heater is somewhere over here.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. And this is the wall. And the air conditioners were here,  
2 through here.

3 Q. Okay. And the staircase -- the entrance to the room is right  
4 here?

5 A. Yeah. This is the door.

6 Q. The staircase, staircase coming down?

7 A. Oh, yeah, the stairs had to be --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. So, this is, this is stair.

11 A. Uh-huh.

12 Q. This is your door?

13 A. Uh-huh.

14 Q. Correct?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. This is water heater --

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. -- right here. And the gas meters are on this wall?

19 A. I believe it's on this side, the gas meters.

20 Q. The gas meters are here?

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Okay. And where are your windows, two windows you mentioned?

23 A. Yeah. Somewhere right here.

24 Q. Okay. And which one, which one -- which window you think is  
25 glass and which one is wood holes? If you remember.

1 A. I don't remember.

2 Q. If you don't remember, that is fine. I won't put anything  
3 wrong in here.

4 A. Yeah.

5 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. All right. Now we can ask the questions  
6 much easier that way.

7 BY MR. PRICE:

8 Q. So how long -- do you know when these air conditioning units  
9 were delivered?

10 A. It was -- I'm not sure. It was May Sunday. I was off that  
11 day, when they deliver it. I was off. So I don't remember  
12 exactly what day it was. But --

13 Q. You thought Monday -- you thought Sunday before this  
14 incident?

15 A. No, no. That -- those appliances they have for a little  
16 while. Maybe in May. I think May.

17 Q. Okay. May.

18 A. Yeah, I guess, we got it delivered.

19 Q. And do your maintenance people -- were they ever in and out  
20 moving any of those appliances to units?

21 A. No. Only when -- the only time when we move these appliances  
22 when we have to replace the whole unit. And then we call  
23 contractor to do that and they remove it.

24 Q. Who is the contractor that deals with those air conditioning  
25 units?



1 A. They call Tepco. Tepco. I believe it's T-E -- I'm not sure  
2 if it's P-C-O or T-C-O. But Tepco.

3 MR. CHHATRE: T-E-C-O, something like that?

4 MR. HILDAGO: Yeah, T-E --

5 MR. CHHATRE: C-O?

6 MR. HILDAGO: -- C -- I believe it's P-C-O -- or T over here.

7 MR. CHHATRE: Oh, Tetco or something like --

8 MR. HILDAGO: Something --

9 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Something like that. Okay. We will --  
10 we can find out.

11 BY MR. PRICE:

12 Q. Do you supervise either the air conditioning unit delivery or  
13 the Tetco contractor who is moving things in and out of the  
14 storage room?

15 A. No. I go with them because I have a key. They don't have no  
16 key. So I had to open the door for them, tell them what we need  
17 for that particular unit, because sometimes we use the whole thing  
18 -- the furnace, the coolant, and that -- and sometimes we just  
19 need the condenser and the coil.

20 Q. And has there been -- have either of those contractors been  
21 in that storage room in the last 90 days, since you been there?

22 A. Not that I know of, no.

23 Q. Okay. Other than maintenance personnel, your maintenance  
24 personnel, are you aware of any other individuals that have had  
25 access to that storage room?

1 A. Nobody else that I know of.

2 Q. And do your maintenance personnel ever have to move things  
3 around within the storage room to make room for things? That you  
4 know of.

5 A. No, I don't know. Because the way I see it, I don't see they  
6 move anything.

7 Q. Okay. With regard to your inspection of water heaters, do  
8 you actually touch any component of a water heater when you're  
9 inspecting it?

10 A. No. When I inspecting it, I don't touch anything. I just  
11 let it see how they're working, and then if I see something wrong,  
12 I report it to say fix it.

13 Q. Okay. You were asked about Mr. Castillo and whether you knew  
14 him.

15 A. Castillo? Who is the --

16 Q. Melty Castillo. You don't know him or anything about him?

17 A. No.

18 MR. CHHATRE: He said no.

19 MR. PRICE: He said no. Right, I --

20 MR. CHHATRE: He said earlier no.

21 BY MR. PRICE:

22 Q. And Mr. Diaz, you also did not know him?

23 A. No.

24 Q. Mr. Hildago, did you receive any training from Kay Management  
25 or Mr. Stith (ph.) at Kay Management, any formal training when you

1 were hired?

2 A. What kind of training?

3 Q. Regarding water heater appliances.

4 A. I worked with Ron. He told me to check when I have to  
5 inspect the hot water heater, looking for this -- you know, for  
6 leaks and that.

7 MR. PRICE: Okay. That's all I have.

8 MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

9 BY LT. OLIN:

10 Q. Bill Olin, Montgomery County. In your course of going into  
11 that room, did -- you just said you just -- you look at the air  
12 conditioners and the hot water heater. Do you take anything else  
13 into -- do you look at anything else? Do you ever go over and,  
14 like, look at the gas meters at all?

15 A. Well, when I go over there to the room, what I do is I check  
16 the hot water heater. And also I stay close to the meters to see  
17 I can get any smell on that side.

18 Q. Uh-huh.

19 A. Or on the hot water heater side.

20 Q. Do you recall if the -- in the other meter rooms that we've  
21 looked in, the laundry rooms, the gas pipes are all painted --  
22 nicely painted yellow.

23 A. Yellow, correct.

24 Q. Were the gas pipes in that room painted yellow as well? Do  
25 you recall?

1 A. I believe it's painted.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. It is painted.

4 Q. And do you have any idea who on your staff takes care of  
5 stuff like that? I mean, there --

6 A. Not at this point. Because that was -- it was already  
7 painted when I started working there.

8 Q. That was already --

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. On that front wall by the windows there was some shelving.

11 A. I know it, I know it was a shelf soon when you come into the  
12 door, on your right, it was one shelf and then another shelf on  
13 this wall.

14 Q. Uh-huh.

15 A. But over here, I guess not.

16 Q. And then, so --

17 MR. HILDAGO: It's a shelf --

18 MR. CHHATRE: Yeah.

19 MR. HILDAGO: -- right here. On this wall too.

20 MR. CHHATRE: And write down your name on that drawing  
21 someplace that I know you produce, date.

22 BY LT. OLIN:

23 Q. So, that shelf, did it go from floor all the way to the  
24 ceiling? Or do you recall?

25 A. Probably from here about to here.

1 Q. Okay. But it -- and it didn't come -- I mean, if you had to  
2 estimate, how far away from the gas meters was it?

3 A. It was kind of far.

4 Q. Kind of far?

5 A. Yeah, it was kind of far.

6 Q. All right. Do you recall if there was a smoke detector in  
7 that meter room?

8 A. I believe it was.

9 Q. Was there any type of an exhaust fan that you know of, like a  
10 fan or anything?

11 A. I'm not sure. I'm not sure.

12 LT. OLIN: That's all I've got. Thank you.

13 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Kelly?

14 BY MR. EMEABA:

15 Q. This is Kalu Kelly Emeaba, from NTSB. You mentioned right up  
16 front that you worked for Kay Management for 3 months now -- about  
17 3 months? Please, what were you doing before you became hired by  
18 Kay Management?

19 A. I was assistant supervisor on Robbins Property in Baltimore.  
20 I was doing maintenance.

21 Q. The same thing?

22 A. Same thing, yeah.

23 Q. Okay. Now you mentioned the inspection of the hot water  
24 meters and the 26 water heaters you do the inspections on them.  
25 Correct?

1 A. Yeah, every Monday do the inspection for the hot water heater  
2 and the alarm.

3 Q. And the alarms. Okay.

4 A. Uh-huh.

5 Q. But specifically for the 8701, you conducted that on August  
6 the 8th?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Yeah. After inspections, do you document your findings?

9 A. Yeah. We write -- we have to -- we have a book to say that  
10 we checked, you know, we checked the -- those things every Monday.  
11 They have a date, so we have to just checking and sign.

12 Q. So if we call to the office, we'll be able to get your report  
13 of what you did on that particular day?

14 A. It was in the office over there so I don't know. It was --  
15 because we keep it up in the office.

16 Q. Okay. It's documented.

17 A. Uh-huh.

18 Q. Okay. Now speaking about the entrance and door to the  
19 apartment -- I mean, to the storage, when is it -- how does it  
20 close? Does it close by itself or you have to actually close it?

21 A. No, it's closed by itself. They got like a door stopper.  
22 You pull it up and the door fell. But we double-check to see it's  
23 shut.

24 Q. So you have to check it?

25 A. Uh-huh.

1 Q. Have there been any recent incident of the door key not  
2 working, functioning properly?

3 A. No. Not in these 3 months, I don't have that problem with  
4 the key.

5 Q. Can you remember on -- after your work on the 8th, which was  
6 about 9:30, 10, you mentioned, you will do a hand-over, or you  
7 have to work from morning to evening?

8 A. No, I have to work at 8 to 5.

9 Q. Eight to 5.

10 A. Eight to 5, that day I work.

11 Q. Do anybody work at night?

12 A. No, not at night. I stay between 5 to 6, because the office  
13 is still -- they close at 6. I stay to 6, on 8703, waiting to see  
14 they call for air conditioner. And then if they call before 6, I  
15 can go off right away. Because the traffic is very tight after 5.  
16 So I prefer to stay to 6, when they close it. And no matter if I  
17 am not on call or I am on call, I stay to 6.

18 Q. Are there some people that reports to you?

19 A. Huh?

20 Q. Do you have people that reports to you? Do you supervise  
21 anybody?

22 A. Not really. I do not supervise nobody. No.

23 Q. So all the maintenance technicians, are they -- everybody on  
24 their own, their work?

25 A. No.

1 Q. How does it work, please? Can you tell us?

2 A. The manager is the one telling them what did they have to do.  
3 So -- on that day or other project. And then on my side, I had to  
4 keep the eyes on the air conditioner now because it's a hot  
5 season. That where I stay most of the time, the air conditioning.

6 Q. Okay. Now, if you do put your eyes on the air conditioners,  
7 like you mentioned the one in the storage room at 8701, there were  
8 new ones that are stored in there, if after you have gone -- like  
9 you went there on the 8th and you saw everything, saw the number  
10 of AC, if another person would go after you around the next day,  
11 do you have to go back to check it again to make sure that they  
12 are still there?

13 A. No. Because the person on call, he had to make sure all the  
14 door is locked because he had to put the alarm before he leave.  
15 That's the person on call. That's going to be around 6:00.

16 Q. Okay. That's around 6:00, before you put the alarm?

17 A. That's the person who puts the alarm.

18 Q. Yes.

19 A. Correct.

20 Q. But if the person goes during the day --

21 A. Uh-huh.

22 Q. -- he doesn't need an alarm. Correct?

23 A. No.

24 Q. Okay. Do they inform you, since you are -- it's like you are  
25 the one in charge to make sure the air conditioner is there and



1 the water heater is working. So if any other person goes there  
2 before that time, you do not have any information?

3 A. Well, no, I don't see it. I don't see it. But maybe  
4 somebody can go behind, because sometimes they need something from  
5 that room like toilet paper or something like that. But physical,  
6 I don't see after me on that day somebody have went after me on  
7 that day. I don't see it.

8 MR. EMEABA: Okay. Thank you, so much.

9 MR. HILDAGO: Okay.

10 BY MR. CHHATRE:

11 Q. This is Ravi. Just a couple of quick ones. The air  
12 conditioning units, you said there are some stored in 8701. How  
13 big are those, roughly? How big are the air conditioning units  
14 that were stored? Roughly.

15 A. Okay. How I can say it. Well, the condenser units is like  
16 maybe this size. Because it's 2 tons. Probably like this size.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. And then we do put one, the other one on top. The furnace is  
19 somewhat like this wide too, but it's higher. And the coil  
20 probably is like this.

21 Q. When you say furnace, what kind of furnace you are talking  
22 about? Are you talking --

23 A. The gas furnace for the heating.

24 Q. Okay. All right. And any of the electronic ignition water  
25 heaters, do you ever smell any gas odor at all in any of the

1 units?

2 A. No. No.

3 Q. Do you encounter any gas furnace not working? You may not  
4 have smelled the odor, but did you see anything that's not working  
5 at all?

6 A. On the gas furnace?

7 Q. Right.

8 A. For the heat?

9 Q. The water heater. I'm sorry. Not the gas, the water heater.

10 A. Okay. Can you repeat that question?

11 Q. Yes. Do you -- in your 3 months, did you see any water  
12 heater not working? Meaning no -- customers are not getting hot  
13 water. Has it happened?

14 A. One time.

15 Q. For electronic ignition?

16 A. Oh, no, no. For the standing pilot.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. For the electronic ignition, no.

19 Q. So what -- do you know what happens on the water heaters if  
20 your gas valve is not working? What will happen? Are you trained  
21 to do anything on that, or you're not?

22 A. No.

23 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. That's it. That's all for me.

24 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

25 Q. The water heater in 8701, does that have a gate or fence

1 around it?

2 A. Oh, you say is it closed?

3 Q. Yes.

4 A. No. That was -- it was open.

5 Q. It was open?

6 A. That the only one it not have no gate.

7 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. That's all.

8 MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Nothing.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't have anything. Thank you.

11 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. If not, thank you very much for coming.

12 I appreciate your help.

13 MR. HILDAGO: No problem.

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: THE EXPLOSION OF APARTMENT  
BUILDING 8701 OF FLOWER BRANCH  
APARTMENTS IN SILVER SPRING,  
MARYLAND ON AUGUST 10, 2016  
Interview of Eduardo Hildago

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA16FP003

PLACE: Silver Spring, Maryland

DATE: August 27, 2016

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.

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Jane W. Gilliam  
Transcriber