

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: KELSHALL RAMROOP

NTSB Headquarters
Washington, D.C.

Monday,
August 29, 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
Tel: [REDACTED]

KALU KELLY EMEABA, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
Tel: [REDACTED]

RASHMIKANT AMROLIWALA, Pipeline Safety Engineer
Public Service Commission
Tel: [REDACTED]

STEVE PRICE, Division Head of Systems Operations
Washington Gas
Tel: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

LT. WILLIAM OLIN, Fire and Explosives Investigator
Montgomery County, Maryland
Tel: [REDACTED].
[REDACTED]

JAMES MISSOULA, President
Associates Plumbing, Inc.
(On behalf Mr. Ramroop)

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. CHHATRE: Good morning. Today is Monday, August 29,
3 2016. We are currently in the NTSB headquarters located at 490
4 L'Enfant Plaza East, S.W., Washington, D.C. We are meeting
5 regarding the investigation of explosion of building 8701, Flower
6 Branch Apartments, Silver Spring, Maryland that occurred on August
7 10, 2016.

8 My name is Ravi Chhatre. I'm with National Transportation
9 Safety Board located in Washington Safety Board and I'm the
10 investigator in charge of this accident. The NTSB investigation
11 number for this accident is DCA16FB003.

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

17 Also, I would like to inform Mr. Kelly Ramroop?

18 MR. RAMROOP: Yes.

19 MR. CHHATRE: That you are permitted to have one other person
20 present with you during the interview. This is a person of your
21 choice -- your supervisor, friend, family member -- or, if you
22 choose, no one at all.

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

1 chosen to be present with you during your interview.

2 MR. RAMROOP: Okay. It's Kelshall Ramroop. It's K-e-l-s-h-
3 a-l-l; Ramroop R-a-m-r-o-o-p. Everybody just calls me Kelly at
4 the company for short. And mailing address -- I mean, I'm a
5 journeyman, plumber. And the mailing address is 8630 Gerwig Lane,
6 Columbia, Maryland. And I've got Jim Mazzullo of the company
7 representing me today.

8 MR. CHHATRE: And your title?

9 MR. RAMROOP: Plumber. Journeyman plumber.

10 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. And tell me -- now, I'd like to go
11 around the room and have each person introduce themselves. Please
12 state your name, spelling of your name, your title, and
13 organization you represent, and your business contact information,
14 starting from my left.

15 MS. GUNARATNAM: Rachael Gunaratnam. R-a-c-h-a-e-l, G-u-n-a-
16 r-a-t-n-a-m. Hazmat investigator, NTSB. Number [REDACTED].

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

19 MR. PRICE: Steve Price, division head system operations,
20 Washington Gas. Telephone number: [REDACTED]. And email
21 address: [REDACTED]

22 MR. AMROLIWALA: Rashmikan Amroliwala. R-a-s-h-m-i-k-a-n-t,
23 and last name is A-m-r-o-l-i-w-a-l-a. I'm working with the State
24 of Maryland Public Service Commission, Gas Pipeline Safety
25 Department. And my number is [REDACTED].

1 LT. OLIN: Lieutenant William Olin, fire and explosives
2 investigator for Montgomery County, Maryland. My phone number is
3 [REDACTED]. My email, [REDACTED],

4 [REDACTED].

5 MR. MISSOULA: I am James Missoula (ph.), president of
6 Associates Plumbing. And my contact information is
7 jim@associatesplumbing.com, and my phone number is [REDACTED].

8 INTERVIEW OF KELSHALL RAMROOP

9 BY MR CHHATRE:

10 Q. Mr. Ramroop, for the record, please state your educational
11 background, any formal education, any training that you have
12 received for the current job.

13 A. I got a GED and I did 1 year at the plumbing apprentice
14 school program.

15 Q. And have you received any in-house training?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Can you tell us what kind of training?

18 A. It's plumbing apprentice, 2 years.

19 Q. Okay. And what did you do as a plumbing apprentice?

20 A. Assisted plumbers, working on pipes, getting stuff together.

21 Q. Okay. And during that 2 years, did you install any -- did
22 you assist in any water heaters installation?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. So after your apprentice, what did you do next?

25 A. Started off as -- on a junior mechanic.

1 Q. Okay. And what did you do as a junior mechanic?

2 A. Pretty much little stuff, little leaks here. Residential
3 water heaters.

4 Q. Okay. So have you installed residential water heaters by
5 yourself or under somebody's supervision?

6 A. By myself.

7 Q. And how many years have you been with the company?

8 A. A little over 16 years.

9 Q. And what kind of license you hold?

10 A. Journeyman, plumber.

11 Q. And is it current?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And when does it expire?

14 A. In 3 years.

15 Q. Okay. So tell me your involvement with the water heater
16 installation at 8701 Flower Branch. Just walk me through --

17 A. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

18 Q. You know, what do you know, and, you know, the story, if you
19 would?

20 A. Okay. I got the call at like 2:00, 2:30 in the afternoon.

21 Got there, they said the water heater had no hot water to the
22 building. Got there, found the heater was leaking (indiscernible)
23 at the bottom.

24 Q. Okay. Do you know -- when was it? If you know. If you
25 don't --

1 A. No, I don't -- no. It was like 4 years ago.

2 Q. Oh, okay. About 4 years ago.

3 A. Yeah. Yes.

4 Q. And then what happened?

5 A. So then I shut the valves off, cut the old heater out,
6 waited for the contractor to bring the new heater in, set it in
7 place, and hook it all up.

8 Q. Okay. Do you remember what company the heater -- which
9 company or what --

10 A. Ferguson.

11 Q. Ferguson.

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Okay. Any other details you remember?

14 A. No.

15 Q. And well, how do you go about installing it? Any help from
16 somebody?

17 A. Yes, I have my apprentice with me.

18 Q. Okay. And what's his or her name?

19 A. Henry.

20 Q. Okay. Last name?

21 A. Guzman.

22 Q. Okay. Do you remember when you started work or when did you
23 finish? I would just -- walk me through, just tell me the story.

24 A. Yeah, yeah. Started like probably like 4, 4:30 in the
25 afternoon.

1 Q. About 4 years ago?

2 A. Yes. And then we, like I said, we shut the heater off, shut
3 the valves off to the heater. We removed the old heater from the
4 -- and then the contractor came, took the old heater, set the new
5 one in place, and we started piping in the heater back.

6 Q. Okay. Do remember any piping details, what size the pipe
7 was?

8 A. It was an inch and a half, domestic water. And the gas
9 piping was three-quarter inch.

10 Q. Okay. And do you remember what kind of installation you did,
11 any problems with the installation?

12 A. No, not at all. No.

13 Q. Okay. And how long it took you to install it?

14 A. Probably about 45 minutes, the new heater.

15 Q. Okay. That's pretty quick.

16 A. Yeah, I mean -- yeah, it's not bad at all. Everything lined
17 up along with the same, so -- the flue --

18 Q. Oh, so did he have to modify any piping at all to
19 accommodate --

20 A. No, no.

21 Q. -- the new heater?

22 A. No.

23 Q. Was it the same size?

24 A. Yeah, same size. Correct.

25 Q. So after you install it, after you do the plumbing, what do

1 you do to the new heater?

2 A. Cycle the heaters a couple -- several times, check for gas
3 leaks.

4 Q. And how do you check for the gas leaks?

5 A. Leak detector.

6 Q. And how -- are you trained to do that?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. And how do you get your training?

9 A. Through the company.

10 Q. Company.

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Do you know what kind of meter was it?

13 A. Regular gas meter, house -- was a regular -- yeah.

14 Q. Oh, tell me how will you know if the gas is leaking or not
15 leaking?

16 A. Oh, I mean, if I'm doing a meter, like a meter sniffer test,
17 I'll do it for 20 minutes, but I didn't shut the gas off to the
18 meter. I just shut the gas off from the heater. So restore the
19 gas back on to the heater and checked a couple joints --

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. -- with the leak detector.

22 Q. With the soapy, soap water?

23 A. Yeah, it's like a soapy --

24 Q. Tell me. Walk me through.

25 A. Yeah, yeah. It's like a soapy test. Yeah.

1 Q. Well, tell me. I mean, I (indiscernible). What do you --

2 A. Soap it up. Yeah, soap it up. Give it a couple seconds,
3 make sure there are no bubbles.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Soap it up again. So, several times.

6 Q. And if there's a leak, how will you go about fixing it?

7 A. You pretty much shut the gas valve off and the heater, take
8 it apart, re-dope it.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Clean the tread and --

11 Q. And did it happen that way to this heater, did it --

12 A. No, no, no.

13 Q. Pretty good, huh?

14 A. Yeah, it went pretty good. Yeah.

15 Q. Okay. Did you check any valves?

16 A. I changed one valve to the water heater with a three-quarter
17 inch gas cock.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Had to bring it up to code. It was old three-quarter inch
20 square head.

21 Q. And did the reason for changing the valve?

22 A. It was old, old styles. And we got to bring it up to code
23 when we ever we do it, so --

24 Q. And no leaks at the valve either?

25 A. No, no leaks at the valve.

1 Q. And how many water heaters of this kind you have installed?

2 The water heater you installed at 8701 --

3 A. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Probably a little over 300.

4 Q. Oh, 300 of those?

5 A. Yeah, there's a lot. Yeah.

6 Q. Okay. Well, with that kind of experience, tell me what kind
7 of problems you encountered while doing the installation of these
8 heaters? I'm not saying you had a problem on this one.

9 A. Right, right, right.

10 Q. Tell me what kind of particular problems you'll see, if you
11 see any.

12 A. I mean, I'm just seeing -- I mean, the hardest thing pretty
13 much the (indiscernible) the removal of the old heaters.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Yeah, that's probably it.

16 Q. So once you put a new heater in --

17 A. It's pretty easy. Yeah.

18 Q. It's pretty easy.

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. And this new water heaters, was it the same capacity, same
21 size as the old one?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Do you remember what the old water heater was, which company?
24 If you don't, you don't.

25 A. No, I don't.

1 Q. Do you at least know if it's the same company, if not the
2 model?

3 A. Think it's a different company. Yes.

4 Q. Different company. But still the plumbing was still
5 active --

6 A. Yes, it was.

7 Q. The plumbing, you didn't have to modify any plumbing at all?

8 A. No, no.

9 Q. Because I remember at my home, the water heater changed --

10 A. Yeah, the (indiscernible).

11 Q. -- we had to modify the plumbing. That's why I'm asking you.

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. No modification?

14 A. A lot of residential heaters. Yeah.

15 Q. Okay. So walk me through the testing. You went in, you got
16 the old water heater out, you put the new heater in, you did your
17 plumbing.

18 A. Right.

19 Q. What kind of testing you did on the new water heater?

20 A. Cycle the heater several times, started off on 90 degrees and
21 then get it up to 120, which is like four cycles.

22 Q. I'm not sure I understand really cycling, so --

23 A. Yeah. You cycle the hot water. You turn the heater back on.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Start it off at 90 degrees. Let it satisfy at 100 degrees,

1 then do 105, let the heater go through the cycle, satisfy.

2 Q. So when you say cycle, do you mean you drain the water, or --

3 A. No, no, no. The heater gets up to temperature and then it
4 automatically shuts off.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. When you just adjust the thermostat to 150, it'll cycle
7 again.

8 Q. Okay. So how high did you go?

9 A. 120.

10 Q. 155, right?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. And you started at 90?

13 A. At 90. Correct.

14 Q. And how do you measure the temperature of the water?

15 A. There's a little thermometer under domestic hot water piping.

16 Q. So, I mean, you have to stick the thermometer in the water,
17 or you do by the --

18 A. By the thermometer on the well, yeah.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. On the domestic hot water line.

21 Q. And so is that a port that you can just monitor?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Yeah. Okay. And how long it took you to go through 90 to
24 120?

25 A. Probably like a little over 10 minutes.

1 Q. Oh, what is the capacity of the water heater?

2 A. It's 80 gallons.

3 Q. 80 gallons. That's a lot. Ten minutes you said?

4 A. Yeah. Might be a little more than -- yeah.

5 Q. Right. Okay.

6 A. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

7 Q. Roughly. I mean, it's not like hours.

8 A. Right, right. No, no.

9 Q. Yeah. Okay. So it took 15 minutes, 90 degrees, went to 120.

10 A. Right.

11 Q. Now is the temperature pretty uniform in the tank, do you
12 know? Or is it like where the gate is or --

13 A. What do you mean uniform?

14 Q. Well, it's (indiscernible) for 80 gallons.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. Right. So is that tank the same temperature or how do you
17 know what the temperature can be --

18 A. Yeah. I mean, it'll tell you the thermostat on the bottom,
19 yeah.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. And you adjust it. And I think it goes from like 90 to 180.

22 Q. But do you go someplace and kind of take the water out and
23 drain the water, or some sort or -- you just make -- only raise
24 the temperature?

25 A. Yeah, just the temperature. Or we go to -- sort of close the

1 sink and run the water and put a thermometer right there.

2 Q. Okay. And did you see any leaks at this particular location?
3 Any gas leaks, water leaks?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Nothing. Have you ever -- do you normally have any problems
6 with water heaters from 2012 until 2016, roughly 4 years? Have
7 you heard is there any complaints that the heater was not working
8 properly? This particular model.

9 A. No, not to my knowledge. No.

10 Q. Not to your knowledge.

11 A. No.

12 Q. Okay. With this particular model, I guess Ferguson, you said
13 -- have you ever gone to any other location where there's a
14 problem with the water heater of this manufacturer?

15 A. I mean, we always got calls no hot water. So I mean we have
16 to replace the pilot assembly, internal --

17 Q. Okay. And what specifically the reason when there's no hot
18 water?

19 A. The pilot assembly is bad, the ground (indiscernible) bad.

20 Q. I'm sorry? The --

21 A. The pilot assembly.

22 Q. Pilot assembly. Okay.

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. So you -- and in this particular water heater, was it an
25 automatic pilot or was it a flame?

1 A. I can't --

2 Q. You can't remember?

3 A. Yeah, I mean, I don't -- yeah.

4 Q. Now, the typical problems you said that no hot water, is that
5 the flame water heater or is that electronic ignition?

6 A. Electronic or standing pilots.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. So no hot water could also be a problem, complaint for
10 electronic ignition?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. And then what do you do with those kind of complaints?

13 A. I diagnose the water heaters, see what stuff was wrong with
14 it, call the supervisor. They'll tell you where to go get parts.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Go get the new parts.

17 Q. So typically what kind of parts do you get?

18 A. Pilot assembly or sometime it can be a bad gas valve to the
19 heater.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. A module box.

22 Q. Okay. And have you changed the gas valves?

23 A. Yes. Not on the new one.

24 Q. Not on this one.

25 A. Yeah, you're right.

1 Q. But I'm talking about --

2 A. Yeah. In the past. Yes.

3 Q. In the past.

4 A. Correct.

5 Q. And would that be electronic ignition or would that be --

6 A. Electronic and standing pilots.

7 Q. Standing pilots.

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay. You have changed both?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. And typically, when you change those, how old are the water
12 heaters?

13 A. Pretty old, man, like 10, 12 years old.

14 Q. Okay. Have you done any valve changes for the water heaters
15 about less than 5 years old?

16 A. No, it's -- yeah, no, they're pretty much electronic pilots
17 only.

18 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. That's all I have. Thank you very much.

19 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

20 Q. So after you installed it, WSSC inspected it, were you
21 present during the inspection?

22 A. No.

23 Q. Okay. Do you help fill out the permit at all or --

24 A. No, the office does that.

25 Q. The office did it?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Oh, okay. So how -- do you know how soon they come to
3 inspect after you install it?

4 A. Ten days they came out. Yeah.

5 MS. GUNARATNAM: Okay. That's it for now.

6 MR. CHHATRE: Kelly?

7 BY MR. EMEABA:

8 Q. Okay. You mentioned, in response to Ravi, you mentioned you
9 were a journeyman -- I mean, a journeyman licensed. Correct --

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. -- that's what you have? And when you joined the company,
12 you came in as an apprentice?

13 A. Correct.

14 Q. Okay. And that's also what you call a helper too?

15 A. Yeah, the helper yes.

16 Q. Okay. So as the helper, an apprentice, can you tell me how
17 did you learn from the people you were following?

18 A. I learn from the older mechanics, the older plumbers, try to
19 work with them. They pretty much teach me step by step.

20 Q. Were there situation you have to question what they were
21 teaching you?

22 A. Some of it, I would -- some of it, I did. Like the -- if it
23 was bigger stuff, I would question. Yeah.

24 Q. Okay, so how -- I mean, from when you learned and your
25 questions gave to them to where you are today, are there some

1 things you now observed that you were taught wrongly, now you have
2 to -- you made some corrections that you teach (indiscernible)?

3 A. No.

4 Q. No.

5 A. No. Pretty much been doing the same thing I've been taught,
6 so -- step by step, so --

7 Q. Okay. You mentioned the cycling of the water was -- it was
8 of interest to me from my own knowledge and I wanted to learn more
9 from you. I know some of the electric pilot do have what they
10 call the A, B, C when you are setting it, some of the pilot. This
11 one that was installed, what kind of setting does it have?

12 A. It just go from like 90 degrees to like 180. That's it.
13 It's just a regular valve, gauge, thermostat. That's all it is.

14 Q. With the numbers 90 or --

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. -- 120?

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. Not a position --

19 A. No, no.

20 Q. -- of A, B, C like some other --

21 A. Nope.

22 Q. -- manufacturers do have them?

23 A. No, those are on the residential heaters.

24 Q. Okay. The one you say you tested it, you were able to do the
25 cycling, where did you place your thermometer or where -- is that

1 thermometer part of the equipment or is it a standard thermometer
2 that you used?

3 A. Exactly. We installed one of the domestic, on outlet side of
4 the water heater. It's a digital thermometer. And then you go to
5 the nearest fixture, run the water, check the water. Then you see
6 what the water temperature on the thermometer.

7 Q. So you installed the thermometer yourself?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. It's on the outlet side of the hot water heater.

11 Q. Okay, okay. What could go wrong with that thermometer?

12 A. I mean, if -- I mean, it's a digital thermometer, so --

13 Q. What can impact it? Can anything impact it?

14 A. No, it pretty much leaks -- if it leaks, then replace it.

15 Q. Okay. So leaving the thermometer in place which you
16 installed, how does it help the users, you know, to know what is
17 happening with the water? Do they have to look at it and make
18 sure that they -- that the water is hot and if it's not hot
19 enough, do they have to call the office? So how does it --

20 A. Like I said, like they'll call. If the thermometer is not
21 reading the water correctly, they'll call the office and then
22 they'll dispatch a plumber when they say they don't have enough
23 hot water.

24 Q. Okay. In the process of installing this water heater, which
25 according to you, you mentioned about 45 minutes or so, what were

1 the abnormal operating condition that you actually consider while
2 you are doing this work, or while you did it?

3 A. When I did it?

4 Q. Yes.

5 A. Part of my job.

6 Q. Yeah, I know. Were there abnormal operating conditions?

7 A. Yeah, that was normal.

8 Q. Safety (indiscernible) --

9 A. Yes, yes, yes.

10 Q. -- you have to -- like what? Can you lead us through?

11 A. Just make sure all the valves are holding correctly, all the
12 valves, the gas valve, the water valves, prior to removing the old
13 ones.

14 Q. Okay. And can you lead me through some of the unions that
15 were connected, how you made them?

16 A. Just -- it was just one union right before the gas valve to
17 the heater. That's all there was. A couple nipples, like three
18 or four nipples, (indiscernible) nipples replaced.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Dope it up, put the pipe dope, put it together, tighten
21 everything up and then soap tested it with a leak detector several
22 times throughout the process.

23 Q. Okay. And how have they done -- if you do a hand tighten and
24 then you put a wrench on it or you put it there just with a wrench
25 on it?

1 A. Yes, hand tighten and then put the wrenches on it. Yes.

2 Q. Okay. What -- if you decide to use your wrench right from
3 start? Can you use your wrench?

4 A. Yes, you can -- yes, but I'll -- I make it a habit with my
5 hand, just to tighten it up with hands and then put the pliers or
6 channel lock on it. Yes.

7 Q. Okay. How possible can the tread misalign even when you do
8 the tightens?

9 A. Oh, you'll definitely feel it. Yes. With the first or
10 second tread, you'll know it's going in the wrong way, so --

11 Q. Okay. And there will be no -- are there no possibility of,
12 you know, it (indiscernible) even though it has gone out of
13 alignment?

14 A. No.

15 MR. AMROLIWALA: All right. Thank you.

16 MR. RAMROOP: That's it for me.

17 BY MR. PRICE:

18 Q. Good morning. Steve Price with Washington Gas.

19 A. Good morning.

20 Q. It's Kelly, correct?

21 A. Kelly. Correct, yes.

22 Q. Would it be possible to just point to the picture that Jim
23 provided up on the wall as to roughly where you disconnected the
24 old water heater?

25 A. Okay.

1 Q. Before removing it?

2 A. Right. Shut the gas valve off to the heater and then we shut
3 the valves off on the inlet on domestic water, took the union
4 apart, took the flue piping apart, cut the water lines out,
5 removed the the old heater to the side. Then I (indiscernible)
6 this valve off with the new gas valve and gas cock.

7 Q. Okay, so the union is between the gas cock --

8 A. Gas cock and the water heater. Correct.

9 Q. -- and the water heater. And that's just the hand and a
10 wrench tightening union?

11 A. Yes, correct. And three-quarter wrench or hand wrench.

12 Q. So the gas cock that you replaced that you referred to was
13 the gas cock on the house line piping at 8701?

14 A. Correct. Right.

15 Q. And the reason for replacing that?

16 A. Because it was the older style square with a spring-load at
17 the bottom. So we were always told to replace it to bring it up
18 to code with a new (indiscernible) one.

19 Q. And what's involved with replacing the gas cock? What do you
20 have to undo and redo to do that?

21 A. I mean pretty much just take the old valve off and just put a
22 new one on.

23 Q. And that's, again, just using wrenches and --

24 A. Yeah, tighten those, yeah. Tighten it up with your hand and
25 then tighten it up with a pipe wrench.

1 Q. So they're all threaded connections?

2 A. Yes. Correct.

3 Q. You indicated that sometimes the hardest part of installing a
4 new water heater is taking out the old one.

5 A. The older one. Correct.

6 Q. Do you recall any difficulty with taking out this one?

7 A. No, this one was pretty easy. It was actually the one I
8 (indiscernible) room.

9 Q. It's in (indiscernible)?

10 A. Yeah, yeah. There was no trash. Nothing around there.

11 So --

12 Q. Other than the water line connections and the gas line pipe
13 connections, was that water heater otherwise anchored to the
14 floor, to the wall?

15 A. No, it pretty much just sit on the floor.

16 Q. Have you done other work in the Flower Gardens apartment?

17 A. Correct.

18 Q. How long have you worked over in that area?

19 A. For the time I been with the company.

20 Q. So 16 years?

21 A. Yeah, 16 years.

22 Q. That's part of your regular route?

23 A. Yeah, pretty much. Yeah.

24 Q. And has Kay Management been in charge of Flower Gardens
25 during that whole time?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. So are you familiar with the personnel of Kay Management who
3 are on the maintenance at Flower Gardens?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Do you know any of them by name?

6 A. No. I didn't deal with one -- I mean normally I deal with
7 property engineer, supervisor. His name was Jose, but he's
8 retired now, so --

9 Q. And what was your practice in terms of getting access to the
10 facilities whenever you were called out there?

11 A. Go to the rental office, and they would contact their guys,
12 maintenance supervisor, and then you he would get us keys and let
13 us into the buildings or access to the water heater rooms.

14 Q. So you would be accompanied by --

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. -- a maintenance person?

17 A. By a maintenance guy. Correct.

18 Q. So you did not sign for keys for yourself?

19 A. No.

20 Q. Someone would let you in?

21 A. Right. Correct.

22 Q. And would the maintenance personnel stay with you while you
23 were doing that work?

24 A. If it's an occupied unit, they'll stay with us most of the
25 time. But if it's like in a basement, storage room, they'll

1 pretty much let us in and then they will go about their business.

2 Q. Were you ever made aware of any maintenance personnel doing
3 work on water heaters at Flower Gardens?

4 A. No, because they always calls us, everything.

5 Q. And on that particular installation, do you remember anything
6 specific about the 8701 water heater installation that sticks out
7 in your mind?

8 A. No.

9 Q. No?

10 A. No.

11 Q. No difficulties, no complexities other than normal?

12 A. Right. It's a normal, brand-new installation.

13 Q. And you don't recall whether the maintenance personnel, Jose,
14 was with you at that time?

15 A. No, he checked on us every so often. Then he would tell
16 us -- I think he left like at 6:00 that day or something. Then
17 the other maintenance guy would check on us every so often also.
18 But it was in a maintenance shop, so that's where they kept all
19 the tools and appliances and --

20 Q. So could you just describe what you remember that room,
21 looking like where the water heater was, with as much detail as
22 you recall?

23 A. Pretty much walked in. I think the gas meter racks back on
24 the back wall, the heaters sit to the right. Typical maintenance
25 shop office. So it had all the parts, materials.

1 Q. What parts and materials?

2 A. Like stuff to work on. A couple like switches and electrical
3 stuff, carpentry stuff, so --

4 Q. Where were they located?

5 A. In the maintenance shop also, which was part of the storage
6 room.

7 Q. In the same room as the meter racks?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. And what were they contained in, these other parts?

10 A. Like they had a shelf, like a bookshelf, with a lot of
11 different stuff, electrical stuff, plumbing stuff, carpentry
12 stuff.

13 Q. What kind of carpentry stuff?

14 A. Nails, screws, door hinges, doorknobs.

15 Q. Any machines that you recall of any kind?

16 A. No.

17 Q. And you mentioned appliances. Do you recall there being
18 other appliances in that room?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. What?

21 A. Like a dishwasher, washer -- yeah, I think it was a
22 dishwasher. They always keep stuff for parts, a old stove or --

23 Q. Where were they located?

24 A. Pretty much I think like when you first walked in the door,
25 it normally sits to the left. They didn't keep a whole lot,

1 probably like two of each.

2 Q. Do you recall whether you had to move anything in order to do
3 your work?

4 A. No, no.

5 Q. The other work that you've done in Flower Garden apartments,
6 is it limited to appliance installation, gas appliance
7 installation?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Yes?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. So you've --

12 A. Hooked up a couple stoves. Yes.

13 Q. Any other appliances, furnaces or --

14 A. No. Just the stoves only. Stoves and water heaters.

15 Q. And did you -- do you have any recollection of doing that in
16 8701?

17 A. No, no, no.

18 Q. In other words --

19 A. Yeah, I can't --

20 Q. You're not sure.

21 A. Right. Not sure.

22 Q. But your records would show that?

23 A. Correct.

24 MR. PRICE: Okay. That's all I have. Thank you.

25 MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

1 MR. RAMROOP: Okay.

2 BY MR. AMROLIWALA:

3 Q. Rashmikant Amroliwala. The water heater, the union is
4 already connected over there. Normally, the piping is designed
5 for maybe 150 PSI, all the fittings and piping. The coating
6 inside the union, that's a rubber washer, what is the life of the
7 rubber washer? Do you think that it can withstand 150 PSI
8 pressure for normally the 10 or 15 years, the life of the pipe or
9 something like that?

10 A. I don't know.

11 Q. So when you go for replacing the water heater or fixing the
12 water heater, do you replace the union all the time or replace the
13 rubber ring, the washer?

14 A. Oh, we put a new union on? I think in this case, I put a new
15 union on.

16 Q. You put a new union all the time. Then how about the rest of
17 the piping, do you replace the rest of the piping or you keep the
18 same piping?

19 A. The same, pretty much the same piping.

20 Q. Keep the same piping. And keep the -- do the pressure test
21 for the piping?

22 A. Right.

23 Q. Okay. Then what kind of piping is normally being used for
24 water heater pipeline?

25 A. It's copper.

1 Q. Is it copper tubing?

2 A. Copper line. Yes.

3 Q. Copper line. And just one more question that -- you already
4 said that normally you check the leaks and everything, so and you
5 use the leak detector also?

6 A. Correct.

7 Q. That's what you mentioned. What kind of leak detector you
8 use?

9 A. It's sort of like a soapy liquid stuff.

10 Q. Pardon?

11 A. It's like a soap, like detergent. It's like a slippery,
12 soapy stuff. You spray it on all the joints you're working on and
13 look for bubbles. If there's a leak, it would bubble up.

14 Q. Oh, okay. So like it's a soap liquid --

15 A. Yes. It's like a soap basically.

16 Q. But you don't use any electronic device to check the leaks,
17 right?

18 A. No, I wasn't (indiscernible).

19 Q. Oh, just check with the soap only --

20 A. Right.

21 Q. -- and make sure that no leak?

22 A. Correct.

23 MR. AMROLIWALA: Okay. All right.

24 MR. CHHATRE: No questions?

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't have anything. No.

1 BY MR. CHHATRE:

2 Q. This is Ravi. A couple of questions. Do you remember the
3 distance from the gas meters to the water heater in that building,
4 8701, approximately?

5 A. No, I don't.

6 Q. Not in feet, but can you tell me like from -- where the
7 (indiscernible) is, that is where my water heater --

8 A. Right.

9 Q. -- how far away was the --

10 A. The meter sit on the back wall.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. And the heater sit over here.

13 Q. Okay. Was it very close or was it --

14 A. Well, like about like let's say 7 feet.

15 Q. Seven feet. Okay. That's close enough.

16 Now with the installation of water heaters, is it a
17 requirement where you install the water heaters that there's
18 enough ventilation? Do you know any code requirements for that?

19 A. For the fresh air makeup? I mean, if -- yeah, yeah.

20 Q. I'm talking about the air needed for the fuel to burn.

21 A. Right.

22 Q. So do you remember was there ventilation in that room?

23 A. No, I don't. No.

24 Q. You don't remember. Did you have difficulty breathing in
25 that room while you were working?

1 A. No, no, no.

2 Q. No difficulty?

3 A. No.

4 Q. Will you typically go and look for the ventilation before you
5 install the water heater to make sure there's enough ventilation,
6 or you don't?

7 A. I mean, yeah, when we install, I mean, if there's a window,
8 we'll open a window up. But when the inspectors come do the
9 inspection, if it needs to make up air, they'll add a window or
10 cut the doors in order to for fresh air makeup, so --

11 Q. But you don't remember anything set up in this particular --
12 8701?

13 A. No, no.

14 Q. You don't remember?

15 A. No.

16 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Then that's all I have. Thank you much.
17 Rachael, Kelly, Steve?

18 MR. PRICE: No, thank you.

19 MR. CHHATRE: Okay, if not, thank you so much for coming and
20 waiting outside for us.

21 MR. RAMROOP: Thank you.

22 MR. CHHATRE: I appreciate your help.

23 MR. RAMROOP: No problem.

24 (Off the record.)

25 (On the record.)

1 MR. MAZZULLO: -- that regarded the gas union. And the
2 question involved around the life of the union. And the unions
3 that we use and one that we replaced and the one even prior to us,
4 there was not a rubber washer in these. That's an old style.
5 That's no longer approved. So neither the one that was existing
6 before it was changed or the one that we changed had a rubber
7 union. They're actually called a ground joint union. And the
8 piping material on the gas piping is all steel pipe.

9 The question seemed to infer about the water heater, so the
10 water connections would be copper, but the gas pipe were all steel
11 nipples and steel piping, steel fittings. The horizontal distance
12 may have been within 7 feet, but the developed length over to the
13 meter would be greater than seven feet. So it's just for
14 clarification.

15 MR. CHHATRE: Sure. And we appreciate that. Thank you for
16 clarification, Mr. Mazzullo. And off the record.

17 (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 Kelshall Ramroop

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA16FP003

PLACE: Washington, D.C.

DATE: August 29, 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.

Katie Leach
Transcriber