

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: ADAM WALLS

Thursday,
December 8, 2016

APPEARANCES:

RICHARD DOWNS, Survival Factors Investigator
Chair, Survival Factors Technical Working Group
National Transportation Safety Board

STEVEN PRICE, Assistant Vice President for
System Operations
Washington Gas

SPENCER NICHOLS, Associate General Counsel
Washington Gas
(On behalf of Mr. Walls)

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I N T E R V I E W

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2 MR. DOWNS: Today's date is December 8, 2016, and the
3 following is an interview being conducted in reference to NTSB
4 investigation number DCA16FP003, which relates to an accident
5 involving a release of natural gas and explosion that occurred in
6 Silver Spring, Maryland, on August 10, 2016.

7 This interview is being conducted with an employee of
8 Washington Gas Company as conducted by the Survival Factors
9 Technical Working Group of the investigation.

10 My name is Richard Downs, and I'm a survival factors
11 investigator with the NTSB, in which I also serve in the role as a
12 Survival Factors Technical Working Group chairperson. I will
13 preside over this interview, which is being recorded for the
14 record, and which a transcript may also be compiled of the
15 recording as a permanent docketed record of the interview.

16 Additionally, to state for the record, the purpose of the
17 investigation is to increase safety and not to assign fault, blame
18 or liability, and that the NTSB cannot offer any guarantee of
19 confidentiality or immunity from legal or certificate actions.

20 Further, pursuant to the criteria under 49 C.F.R. 831.7, the
21 interviewee may have one representative of the interviewee's
22 choice accompanying him or her in this interview, in which the
23 representative may not testify for the interviewee. It is also
24 requested that comments of the interviewee's representative should
25 be limited, and objections expressed by the interviewee's

1 representative are not grounds for the NTSB to refrain from asking
2 questions.

3 I will now ask that our interviewee, our witness, if you can
4 please state your name and spell your last name for the record.

5 MR. WALLS: Sure. My name is Adam Walls. My last name is
6 spelled W-a-l-l-s.

7 MR. DOWNS: Thank you. And what is your employment
8 affiliation? Who do you work for?

9 MR. WALLS: Washington Gas.

10 MR. DOWNS: And what is your job position or job title?

11 MR. WALLS: Service technician.

12 MR. DOWNS: And you accept that we are recording this
13 interview for the record?

14 MR. WALLS: Yes.

15 MR. DOWNS: Thank you. Thank you for joining us today. Are
16 you accompanied today by anyone?

17 MR. WALLS: Yes.

18 MR. DOWNS: And I'll ask that individual to please identify
19 themselves for the record.

20 MR. NICHOLS: Sure. My name is Spencer Nichols. My title is
21 associate general counsel, Washington Gas.

22 MR. DOWNS: Thank you.

23 I'll now ask that the participants of this interview who will
24 have an opportunity to present questions to the witness, to please
25 individually identify themselves, their employment affiliation and

1 job position title for the record.

2 MR. PRICE: My name is Steve Price. I'm assistant vice
3 president of system operations for Washington Gas.

4 MR. DOWNS: Very good. Thank you. And we have no other
5 participants here today.

6 INTERVIEW OF ADAM WALLS

7 BY MR. DOWNS:

8 Q. As my first question for the witness, have you been
9 previously interviewed by anyone or have you discussed your
10 prospective testimony here with anyone regarding your actions that
11 occurred in the accident event?

12 A. No.

13 Q. Thank you.

14 A. You're welcome.

15 Q. Adam, how long have you been -- how long have you worked for
16 Washington Gas Company?

17 A. It will be 18 years December 28th.

18 Q. Eighteen years. Okay. Is it correct that your role or
19 involvement in the event was that you were the initial Washington
20 Gas field technician to respond to the accident site?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Okay. Could you please describe for us in your own words and
23 to your best recollections what occurred on the day of the
24 accident relative to your actions and involvement in the event,
25 starting when you first learned of the event at the accident site?

1 A. I got a phone call from my dispatcher telling me that there
2 was an explosion with a partial building collapse with people
3 trapped. So I then went en route to the job. Arrived at the job.
4 Turned off my vehicle. Put my PPE on. And then I met with the
5 firemen that were in charge of the scene, and they advised me that
6 they needed the gas turned off. So I was able to locate the valve
7 in the street, and we were able to turn the gas off for the fire
8 department.

9 Q. Okay, good. That's a good overall synopsis. So let's back
10 up a little bit, and let's kind of take it step by step of the
11 process. Okay?

12 A. Um-hum.

13 Q. First off, you are -- you actually work out of a Washington
14 Gas facility up there in Rockville, is it?

15 A. I did, yes.

16 Q. Okay. And what's the address of that facility?

17 A. It's 1801 Nebel Street, Rockville.

18 Q. Okay. Nebel?

19 A. Nebel, N-e-b-e-l.

20 Q. N-e-b-e-l.

21 A. Um-hum.

22 Q. Okay. And is that where all of the Washington Gas employees
23 up in Montgomery County work out of or are there other locations?

24 A. There's another station, but that's a gas supply station.

25 Q. A gas supply. So it's not technicians --

1 A. No.

2 Q. -- but field representatives --

3 A. No.

4 Q. -- who work out of there?

5 A. Yeah. Field personnel come out of Nebel Street.

6 Q. Field personnel. Okay. And you work on the nightshift, is
7 it?

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. You go on duty --

10 A. 11 at night till 7 in the morning.

11 Q. -- 11 at night till 7 in the morning is your normal day.
12 Okay.

13 A. Right.

14 Q. And on this particular day, you went on duty at 11:00,
15 11 p.m.?

16 A. Yes, that's right.

17 Q. Okay. Did anything occur between 11 and when you got the
18 call from your supervisor that was out of the ordinary? Did you
19 have any service calls or was it a quiet night?

20 A. It was quiet until then.

21 Q. Quiet until then.

22 A. Um-hum.

23 Q. Okay. And you're normally inside the building when --

24 A. Yes. No, inside my van.

25 Q. Inside your van?

1 A. Yeah, waiting for orders.

2 Q. Waiting for orders.

3 A. Um-hum.

4 Q. They don't let you go into the building?

5 A. Well, they would, yes. I mean, I go into the building if I
6 need to, but typically I'm in my van.

7 Q. Typically you're in the van. Okay. And you were in your van
8 from 11:00 until you actually got the call?

9 A. I probably went into the station to use the bathroom and then
10 went back out to my van, yes.

11 Q. Okay. And when you got the call in your van, had there been
12 any other calls that you had received from your supervisor up to
13 then?

14 A. I called when I first -- after we log into our computers, we
15 call with the dispatcher and we check in to make sure everything
16 is fine. And everything was clear so I was reading at the time
17 when I got the call.

18 Q. Okay. So the -- correct me if I'm wrong. The way it works
19 is that you are standing by essentially to respond to any
20 dispatched events. Is that how it works?

21 A. That's correct. Um-hum.

22 Q. Okay. And you're free to do whatever you want as long as
23 you're in your van in the -- or in the building there at
24 Rockville, right?

25 A. As long as you're ready to go, yes.

1 Q. In other words, there's no other duties in terms of cleaning
2 equipment or anything like that?

3 A. Well, you know, I guess if you want to organize your tools or
4 do whatever, but you have to be ready to take a call at any time.

5 Q. So you're essentially on standby?

6 A. Sure.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Um-hum.

9 Q. And on this particular day you didn't need to clean tools or
10 anything like that. Everything was --

11 A. No.

12 Q. -- fully set up ready to go.

13 A. Right.

14 Q. And that's the normal arrangement and situation for you on a
15 work night like that?

16 A. Um-hum.

17 Q. Okay. All right. So you received the phone call. Is this a
18 company phone?

19 A. It is.

20 Q. Okay. You received a phone call from the supervisor.

21 A. No. From my dispatcher.

22 Q. Or from the -- excuse me -- from the dispatcher. Thank you.
23 And what was the essence of that phone call as best you recall?

24 A. He advised me of the situation that I was -- the job I was
25 about to get. I hadn't received the job yet.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Typically if it's a job for the fire department, I get a
3 phone call first and then I get the order.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. As it's going through the system, he just beats the way it's
6 given -- delivered to me, so --

7 Q. Okay. And you have a computer set up in your truck, I
8 understand?

9 A. Yes, sir. Um-hum.

10 Q. And the computer is set up to communicate data from
11 dispatcher to your van so --

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. -- that you can see exactly what the job location is --

14 A. Right.

15 Q. -- and that sort of thing?

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. Okay. So you got the phone call first before the data
18 appeared on your computer screen?

19 A. Right. Right.

20 Q. Okay. And how long was the phone call? Do you remember
21 roughly?

22 A. I would have to say less than a minute.

23 Q. Very quick.

24 A. He advised me of what the situation was and I told him that
25 I'd be en route.

1 Q. Okay. Very good. And then what did you do? I want to kind
2 of go point-by-point as best we can reconstruct here because that
3 way we'll have a good clean understanding, clear understanding of
4 the scenario. Okay. So you got the phone call.

5 A. Um-hum.

6 Q. Maybe lasting less than a minute, relatively short, very
7 brief. Then what happened? Did you notice the computer screen or
8 does the computer screen flag the message or how does that work?

9 A. No. After I got the phone call from the dispatcher -- before
10 that, the last time I had looked at the clock, I believe it was
11 quarter till 12.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. So reading, I wasn't paying that much attention to the time.
14 I assumed it was still before 12. So I called the supervisor
15 that's on until midnight, and then he advised me that he was
16 actually off the clock but that he was going to respond to the
17 incident as well.

18 Q. Okay. So --

19 A. So then after I spoke to that supervisor, then the order
20 appeared, I went en route, and then I drove to the --

21 Q. Okay. So you get the call from dispatch. You then called
22 your supervisor to provide the courtesy alert there, right?

23 A. Right. Um-hum.

24 Q. Was that a relatively quick call?

25 A. It was, yes.

1 Q. And the supervisor indicated that he was going to be en route
2 as well.

3 A. He was going to be en route even though it was after actually
4 the time that he was on the clock, so --

5 Q. So it sounds like he recognized that it was a relatively --

6 A. Severe, yes.

7 Q. -- severe event and that it would be to his best advantage --

8 A. Right.

9 Q. -- to have presence.

10 A. Right.

11 Q. Okay, good. So then you noticed or you switched on -- is the
12 computer on all the time?

13 A. It's on all the time.

14 Q. And then you noticed the message or did it suddenly appear?
15 How did that occur?

16 A. The order pops up. You acknowledge the order, and then you
17 hit "en route" to the order when you are driving to the job.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Before you start driving to the job.

20 Q. Okay. So make sure that I'm understanding this here.

21 A. Sure.

22 Q. The message pops up. You acknowledge the message and then
23 you proceeded to drive. Do you have to key in on a map or
24 something, map display in terms of the best routing to the site?

25 A. Well, there is -- we have a separate TomTom GPS in our

1 trucks, and we put the address in and then it will shoot us there
2 the fastest route.

3 Q. Is that what you did --

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. -- on this particular day? Okay.

6 And how long does that take typically to type in that -- key
7 in that message, that instructions to the site?

8 A. Ten or 15 seconds. Just to put the address in.

9 Q. Relatively quick.

10 A. Yeah, ZIP code and the address.

11 Q. ZIP code and -- so you had the ZIP code and the address.

12 A. Um-hum.

13 Q. Okay. Good. And then did anything else happen immediately
14 after that once you put the address into the system and it flashed
15 the best route on the --

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. -- map for you?

18 A. Yeah. It pops up, gives you the mileage, and it gives you
19 the estimated time that you'll arrive there. And then according
20 to the estimated time from the GPS, that's typically what we give
21 our ETA to our dispatcher as.

22 Q. Okay. Did you give that ETA to the dispatcher --

23 A. I did.

24 Q. -- at that time?

25 A. Over the radio.

1 Q. Over the radio. Okay.

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. So you have communications by both cell phone, company cell
4 phone and a radio?

5 A. Yeah, there's -- when we get a Code 1 job, everything is
6 supposed to be acknowledged over the radio as far as your ETA to
7 the job. And then when you get on-site you acknowledge all that
8 over the radio.

9 Q. Okay. So it's actually three -- you have the cell phone, the
10 radio and the computer system --

11 A. Right.

12 Q. -- that you can, I guess, dialogue with to a certain degree?

13 A. Right. Yeah. And after you go en route to a job, once you
14 get to the job, you hit "on-site," and that also captures your
15 time.

16 Q. Okay. So good. You have a good automatic log, if you
17 will --

18 A. Right.

19 Q. -- of your activities --

20 A. Right.

21 Q. -- step by step of the process. Okay.

22 During the time between when you first got the call from
23 dispatch and you actually started moving the van, started driving,
24 was there anything that might have delayed you? Did you have to
25 get out of the truck or anything like that or --

1 A. Nope. I was ready to go, so --

2 Q. Ready to go.

3 A. Um-hum.

4 Q. And normally how long is that process? Is that normally a
5 2- or 3-minute process or 4, 5 minutes or 6 or 7 minutes?

6 A. I guess it just depends on the situation. You know, if I get
7 a phone call when I'm in the bathroom, obviously, I have to come
8 out the bathroom. But other than that, if I'm in my van, I'm
9 ready to go.

10 Q. Ready to go.

11 A. Um-hum.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. So it should be within minutes that I'm --

14 Q. Within minutes. And to your best recollection in this case
15 was it very quick, relatively quick? Was it closer to the 2 or 3
16 minutes or 4 or 5 minutes or 7 or 8 minutes?

17 A. Yeah, I thought relatively quick. Yeah, it was relatively
18 quick.

19 Q. Relatively quick. Okay. Great. And you left the Rockville
20 facility in your van, and you were following the map on your
21 system that directs you in the correct direction. Is that
22 correct?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Does that show traffic on there in terms of what to avoid or
25 anything like that or?

1 A. The TomToms don't show -- they won't give you a pop-up where
2 there's traffic or anything like that.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. They won't redirect you if there's traffic. But in the
5 middle of the night typically, unless there's road construction,
6 you're not typically going to run into traffic.

7 Q. And on this particular day was there traffic? It was 11:40
8 at night roughly, whatever.

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. And your experience has been that there's no traffic?

11 A. Yeah. No, fortunately there wasn't any that night.

12 Q. And on this particular night there was no traffic that you
13 encountered.

14 A. No.

15 Q. So you were able to go straightaway to the site.

16 A. Right.

17 Q. Okay, good. And as you're pulling up to the site, describe
18 for us kind of slowly point by point as best as you can recall --

19 A. Sure.

20 Q. I want to try to capture all the elements of your process.

21 A. Okay.

22 Q. As you're approaching the site, what occurred?

23 A. The fire department had the scene secured so there was fire
24 trucks all over the place, and they were -- they had the road
25 blocked off quite a ways away from where the incident had

1 occurred. So once I got through the fire line, so to say, I drove
2 as close as I could to the building and parked my vehicle.

3 Q. Okay. Did you, when you approached the scene and the fire
4 trucks were there, did they recognize it was a Washington Gas van,
5 and they quickly let you through or --

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. -- was there any kind of encounter there?

8 A. No. Once you have your emergency lights flashing, they
9 typically will -- they wave you right through.

10 Q. So you did have your emergency --

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. -- lights flashing?

13 A. Um-hum.

14 Q. Good. Okay. Thank you. So you were able to pull up close
15 to the building.

16 A. Relatively close. A lot of times they have fire lines laid
17 out, hoses all over the place, so you can only get as close as you
18 can get, but --

19 Q. Right.

20 A. I was able to get relatively close.

21 Q. Okay. And we're talking about the building. This is the
22 building on the corner of Arliss Street and Piney Branch Road?

23 A. Um-hum.

24 Q. Was it a visibly evident fire?

25 A. Not from where I was parked. I had to walk around the corner

1 after I spoke to the firemen to actually see where the building
2 was in flames.

3 Q. Good point. Roughly, top of your head, what was the distance
4 in feet, say, between where you had to park the van and actually
5 get around to where you had to go?

6 A. I would guess maybe 5- or 600 feet.

7 Q. 5- or 600. Okay. So there was enough encumbrances,
8 obstacles between where you could park the vehicle and actually
9 get your way up --

10 A. Right.

11 Q. -- to there.

12 A. Right.

13 Q. Okay. So you were able to park your vehicle at some point.
14 Okay. And then what happened?

15 A. Once I put the cones around the vehicle, put my PPE on, and
16 then I met with the firemen that were in charge of the scene, when
17 they advised me what needed to be done. At that point I went up
18 and evaluated the situation, and then came back to the truck and
19 got the tools I needed to get the gas turned off.

20 Q. Okay. So that's standard practice for you to, if you get to,
21 say, a fire site, that you would leave the van and actually
22 personally just go to the fire department --

23 A. Right.

24 Q. -- personnel, get the instructions from them --

25 A. Right.

1 Q. -- and make an assessment what tools that you need?

2 A. Right. Once you get to a site with the fire department, you
3 always have to go to command center first.

4 Q. Incident command?

5 A. Sure.

6 Q. Okay. And was incident command easy to find?

7 A. You always have to ask the other firemen where, you know,
8 where they're located because there were so many pieces of
9 equipment on the scene. There was -- it would have been hard for
10 me to judge by myself.

11 Q. Somewhat confusing, it sounds?

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. But it didn't take but a minute for me to find the people in
15 charge, so --

16 Q. Good. Okay. So the fire department personnel, do you
17 remember who you spoke with? Was it the incident commander or a
18 fire chief or somebody? Do you remember?

19 A. I don't recall any names, to be honest with you.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. They were the command center, but I don't recall the names.

22 Q. And it sounds like the name is really not important at this
23 point.

24 A. No. I needed to know what they wanted me to do. That's what
25 I was after.

1 Q. Okay. Great. So at that point you returned to your van?

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. Okay. And what tools did you gather up at that point? Do
4 you remember?

5 A. I gathered my gas detection equipment. I gathered my valve
6 tools, and I guess regular -- any hand tools that I could carry.

7 Q. Okay. And let's pause for a moment. Is there a protocol in
8 the company's SOP somewhere that would describe what tools that
9 you would need?

10 A. Well, on an emergency you're always to have your gas leak
11 detection equipment. But as far as hand tools, I don't recall
12 that there's anything that's listing an exact tool that you need.

13 Q. So it would be more your experience you'd rely upon, it
14 sounds like?

15 A. Yeah. There's not a whole lot of different tools we would
16 need, so we don't need --

17 Q. Okay. So the gas shutoff tools, what would that encompass?

18 A. The valve key. You would need something to remove a valve
19 cover with. And then you would need a cleanout tool for a valve
20 box, if there was any debris in a valve box that you'd need to
21 clear before you could turn the valve off.

22 Q. Okay. Anything else?

23 A. No.

24 Q. Does your computer system provide a map in terms of exactly
25 where the valves would be in this particular location?

1 A. We do have a mapping system, um-hum.

2 Q. And that's in your truck?

3 A. It is.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. It's on the computer, yes.

6 Q. And where you able to access that on this particular day
7 or did you rely upon that?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. So when did you do that?

10 A. When I log on at the beginning of my shift, I pull up the
11 Small World, which is the system where our mapping system is on.
12 I always pull that up when I start my shift so that it's on and
13 ready to go whenever I get --

14 Q. Ready to go. Okay. And in this particular case, of course
15 you didn't know before the event -- you were alerted to the event.

16 A. Right.

17 Q. At what point did you consult that map in terms of locating
18 the valves?

19 A. Well, to backstep, once we get an order, I typically will
20 pull that up in the "meanst" of talking to somebody. So where I
21 was talking to the dispatcher, whoever, it's very simple; you just
22 pull up the mapping system and you can glance at what you're
23 getting yourself into.

24 Q. I see. And --

25 A. So I had an idea of where the facilities were located before

1 I even got to the --

2 Q. And that would be back when you're in your truck in the
3 parking lot at the --

4 A. Um-hum. Yeah.

5 Q. So that might account for some of the time there in terms of
6 all the little things you have to do --

7 A. Yeah. Right.

8 Q. -- between the phone call, checking the computer system,
9 checking the map and so on, right? Would that be a --

10 A. Yeah. And then --

11 Q. -- correct way of saying it?

12 A. Right.

13 Q. Okay, good.

14 A. It all adds into that initial --

15 Q. Adds into the process.

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Okay. And that would be your typical protocol that you would
18 follow in an event such as this?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Okay, great. All right. So you had a good idea where the
21 valves were on this particular --

22 A. Right.

23 Q. -- building or that general area, right?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. And the fire department instructed you, yes, we need to have

1 the gas shut off. Did they say to this particular building or
2 that building or what did they say? Do you remember?

3 A. They addressed that, where the incident had occurred; where
4 they needed the gas turned off.

5 Q. They pointed it out to you rather easily?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. Was that kind of an obvious thing?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay. And in your mind would that be any kind of a challenge
10 or would that just be a routine thing to be able to shut the gas
11 off from that?

12 A. Well, sometimes, you know, you may have grass overgrown on a
13 valve box or you might have a bush in the way or sometimes it
14 takes a couple minutes to find the valve box.

15 Q. Okay. So you're back at your truck. You're gathering up all
16 your tools, and basically it's all the tools you can carry --

17 A. Right.

18 Q. -- that you think you might need at the time.

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And what did you do then?

21 A. Now at that point, once I had gone back to my truck to gather
22 tools, my supervisor had gotten on-site. So then he was able to
23 help me in carrying some of the things so I didn't have to
24 necessarily carry it all by myself.

25 Q. And what's your supervisor's name?

1 A. Jason Rich.

2 Q. Jason Rich. Okay. And Mr. Rich had arrived about that time.
3 So he basically approached you in your truck or how did that
4 occur?

5 A. I was at the back of my truck getting the tools, and he
6 pulled up and --

7 Q. He pulled up. So it sounds like he was able to recognize
8 your van because you had the lights going and everything, right?

9 A. Right.

10 Q. And that would be the appropriate thing for him to do, simply
11 approach --

12 A. Right.

13 Q. -- the truck to see if he could locate you?

14 A. Um-hum.

15 Q. And he did --

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. -- at your van. Okay. What was the essence of the encounter
18 at that point?

19 A. I just advised him that I had talked to the incident command,
20 and that they advised that we -- they needed the gas turned off.

21 Q. Okay. And what was his response?

22 A. Okay, let's get the tools and go do it.

23 Q. So he was basically going to help you?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. So he's the supervisor, was going to help you at that point?

1 A. We were the only two people there. So, yeah, he --

2 Q. It sounds like a team effort.

3 A. Right. Exactly.

4 Q. Great. Okay. So between the two of you, you gathered up the
5 tools.

6 A. Um-hum.

7 Q. And you then walked back the 500 feet or whatever to the
8 front of the building that's on fire?

9 A. Right. Right.

10 Q. Okay. What did you do then?

11 A. At that point, when I get on a job typically I'll look for
12 old Miss Utility marks on the ground so that I can try to figure
13 out where the utilities are. So at that point I saw where our gas
14 service crossed the street, came over into a grass area next to
15 the building, and the valve box was right there.

16 Q. Right there.

17 A. Um-hum.

18 Q. Is the valve box in the sidewalk or in the grass?

19 A. It's in the grass.

20 Q. In the grass. And it wasn't overgrown or anything?

21 A. No. It couldn't have been any more perfect.

22 Q. You found it easily?

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. Great. It sounds like you have a lot of experience in
25 sniffing out these boxes sometimes.

1 A. Yes. Yeah.

2 Q. So you know what to look for?

3 A. Right.

4 Q. Good. The fire at that point, the building, we hear reports
5 the fire was going pretty good at that point.

6 A. Oh, yeah.

7 Q. Was it hot?

8 A. It was hot. We were close to --

9 Q. Where the box was located?

10 A. It was, um-hum.

11 Q. So, but you were able to get to the box without fire
12 department assist?

13 A. Fire department, they were spraying the building. We were
14 getting soaking wet, so --

15 Q. Okay. So you did get wet in the process, and they were able
16 to keep you -- it sounds like keep you relatively safe in terms of
17 the heat?

18 A. Oh, yeah. They were there to help us, yeah.

19 Q. Okay, good.

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. Okay. So then when you found the box you and your supervisor
22 Jason, what happened next?

23 A. We removed the lid, and found that there was not much debris
24 in the box. So we were able to clear the box relatively quickly
25 and were able to put the valve key on the valve and turn the gas

1 off.

2 Q. Okay. How far down in the box itself, how far down is the
3 valve head?

4 A. On this one in particular, I don't know the exact, but it
5 was --

6 Q. Couple feet, maybe?

7 A. Yeah, 2 or 3 feet.

8 Q. Two or 3 feet?

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. Okay. And is the valve key, is that a long-handled, T-handle
11 type of --

12 A. It is.

13 Q. -- tool?

14 A. Yes, it is. About 4 feet long.

15 Q. And how does that work?

16 A. Once the valve -- the valve key has a cutout on the head. It
17 goes around the top of the valve, and then at that point you turn
18 the valve off.

19 Q. So correct me if I'm wrong. You take the T-handle and you
20 insert the end of the valve key into the hole --

21 A. Right.

22 Q. -- of the box, down to where it engages in the valve.

23 A. Right. Exactly.

24 Q. And you simply turn the --

25 A. Right.

1 Q. -- T-handle to close the valve?

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. Is that a quarter turn, half turn or multiple turns?

4 A. Quarter turn.

5 Q. Quarter turn. So it's a quick closure?

6 A. Right.

7 Q. Okay, good. And the valve turn was easy, easily worked? It
8 didn't -- wasn't jammed up or anything?

9 A. I had a 36-inch wrench I put on the valve key just in case it
10 was going to be tough, and it wasn't tough with a 36-inch wrench.

11 Q. So based on your experience it was an easy turn?

12 A. It was.

13 Q. Great. Okay. Now when you close the valve, tell us what
14 happened next.

15 A. Relatively soon after that the fire went out; the flames died
16 down.

17 Q. Relatively soon. Seconds? Minutes?

18 A. I would say seconds.

19 Q. Seconds.

20 A. Um-hum.

21 Q. So it was immediate response?

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. Visible, visibly evident?

24 A. Oh, yeah. Yeah, it was amazing, to be honest with you.

25 Q. Okay. So at that point what did you do?

1 A. We were happy, and I guess we were talking and we carried our
2 tools back to the vehicle. We did test around the valve to make
3 sure there weren't any gas leak indications. And then at that
4 point I took instructions from the supervisor to --

5 Q. Okay. So when you say test, does that mean with a meter?

6 A. Yes, with a gas leak detection --

7 Q. Gas leak detection meter.

8 A. Um-hum.

9 Q. And you showed no other leakage?

10 A. No.

11 Q. So the process of that would be basically to hold the meter
12 around the ground area of the valve. Is that how it works?

13 A. We have a probe. There's a probe --

14 Q. A probe.

15 A. -- on a hose that's attached to the machine that you would
16 use in either a bar hole or in this case the valve box.

17 Q. Okay. So you placed the probe down into the box hole itself.

18 A. Um-hum.

19 Q. And nothing on the meter?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Okay. So that was a good indicator to you that there's no
22 issues with the valve leaking.

23 A. With the valve, right.

24 Q. Okay. Did you use the meter to check anything else in that
25 general area?

1 A. Only when -- once we went down into the buildings.

2 Q. That was later?

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. It wasn't very --

6 Q. Let's get to that next.

7 A. Right.

8 Q. We're trying to get it step by step of the process here as

9 best we can.

10 A. We didn't go any closer to the building than the valve. At

11 that point the scene was still hot. We didn't --

12 Q. Right. So you basically had to back off anyways because of

13 the heat?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. Okay. So you were saying you closed the valve. You did some

16 meter readings. Everything looked good. So, correct me if I'm

17 wrong, following your normal process you took the tools back to

18 the truck?

19 A. Well, we kept, we kept -- well, everything probably pretty

20 much stayed where it was until -- we didn't need those.

21 Q. Oh, so you didn't take the tools back to your truck

22 immediately?

23 A. Probably not.

24 Q. Okay. But you don't recall exactly?

25 A. I don't recall exactly.

1 Q. Okay. But at that point, after the meter readings, let's try
2 to reconstruct as best we can kind of the next steps of the
3 process in terms of did you interface with the fire department or
4 anything further?

5 A. Once the gas is off, the my supervisor advised dispatch that
6 gas was off.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Over the phone. And I believe I may have called the
9 dispatcher at that point too because I wasn't sure if he had
10 contacted them, so --

11 Q. Right. Okay. So one way or the other you got word back.

12 A. He had to make sure that they knew that the gas was off.

13 Q. Great. So then what did you do?

14 A. At that point I took instruction from the supervisor, so --

15 Q. From Jason?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. And what did he do as far as you could determine? Were you
18 watching him do anything? Was he talking with the fire department
19 or anything?

20 A. He was probably talking with the fire department, on the
21 phone with the dispatcher.

22 Q. Okay. So what occurred next?

23 A. For myself?

24 Q. Right.

25 A. At that point we had to go down to the -- there were more

1 buildings that were affected by us turning the gas off at that
2 valve. So we had to go down and turn off those meter build-ups,
3 and then turn off each meter and put a disk in each meter.

4 Q. So it sounds like, correct me if I'm wrong, Jason had some
5 sort of discussion with the fire department and he received
6 instructions or a request to shut the gas off at those locations?

7 A. That's company policy when we turn the gas off when there's,
8 so to say, an outage. This was because we turned the valve off,
9 that we have to turn off other facilities to make sure everything
10 is secure.

11 Q. So that would be your normal procedure in a case like this?

12 A. Right.

13 Q. So that's what you undertook at that time.

14 A. Right.

15 Q. Is that what you're saying?

16 A. Um-hum.

17 Q. Okay. So the two of you went to other valve locations?

18 A. No. Now at this point the crew -- by this time the crew had
19 arrived, so there was a crew leader and his helper.

20 Q. Crew. When you say crew, is that another Washington Gas
21 crew?

22 A. Underground Washington Gas crew.

23 Q. Underground. Okay. Yeah, let's talk a little bit about the
24 underground crew. You are a field technician, right?

25 A. Um-hum.

1 Q. And the underground crew does what?

2 A. Typically works on the underground facilities.

3 Q. Underground facilities, whereas you don't necessarily work on
4 the underground facilities; is that correct?

5 A. In an emergency --

6 Q. You could.

7 A. -- to control gas flow, right.

8 Q. Just to control, shut the valves as necessary.

9 A. Um-hum.

10 Q. Okay. So this crew would be more capable and equipped to do
11 bigger projects that you would normally --

12 A. Right.

13 Q. -- be able to address?

14 A. If there had been problems with getting the gas turned off at
15 the valve and the valve box.

16 Q. I see.

17 A. Then that's when the crew would have come into play.

18 Q. So the crew arrived at that point. And you had discussion
19 with the crew or what transpired at that point?

20 A. Yeah. I'm sure we had a conversation.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Yeah. At that point the crew -- the crew leader and the
23 helper were the ones that assisted me in turning the gas meters
24 off in the other buildings.

25 Q. Okay. So the next step of the process was to go to the other

1 valves --

2 A. Well, everything else was internal inside the buildings, in
3 the basements.

4 Q. I see.

5 A. There were no other external valve boxes that we turned off.

6 Q. So in this particular case, the valve that you closed
7 serviced the building that was on fire?

8 A. Yeah. If I can recall, I think it was five buildings that
9 that valve --

10 Q. Five buildings that that valve serviced.

11 A. Right.

12 Q. Okay. So your process would be that if you couldn't go into
13 the building in this case that was on fire, which is obvious --

14 A. Right.

15 Q. -- you would try to go to the other buildings that were
16 served by that --

17 A. Right.

18 Q. -- same gas line and actually close the valves inside the
19 structures?

20 A. That's right.

21 Q. Okay. Great. So you then, following your process, went to
22 which building, do you recall, first to shut the gas off?

23 A. The adjacent building. I don't recall the building numbers,
24 to be honest with you, the addresses.

25 Q. That was -- the building that was on fire was the 01 building

1 on the very corner, and the next one that was adjacent attached to
2 it was the 0-3, 03 building.

3 A. Whichever buildings had services. Not all those buildings
4 had gas services inside them, so --

5 Q. I see. So you went into the immediately adjacent building,
6 and did you -- where did you go? To the basement, or where did
7 you go?

8 A. At that point the maintenance man was the person that was
9 giving us assistance into getting into the buildings because all
10 the occupants were out.

11 Q. I see.

12 A. And the front doors were locked. So the maintenance man was
13 with us on-site. He was giving us access to the basements. Where
14 the gas meters were located were inside the laundry rooms in the
15 basements, and that's also where the commercial water heaters, the
16 water heaters were located as well.

17 Q. I see. And they were gas?

18 A. Um-hum.

19 Q. Okay. So he was able to open the door and escort you down
20 immediately to the utility room --

21 A. Right.

22 Q. -- where the meters were located and such?

23 A. Um-hum. That's right.

24 Q. Okay. Was there smoke in that adjacent building at that
25 time?

1 A. No.

2 Q. No smoke.

3 A. No smoke.

4 Q. So you didn't have any problems getting in there?

5 A. No.

6 Q. If there was smoke, what would be the procedure to follow?

7 A. If there was smoke, we probably would've had the firemen come
8 in.

9 Q. And either bring you in or would they be able to shut the
10 valves off with SCBA or --

11 A. The fire department is capable of shutting valves off, yes.

12 Q. Okay. So in the interest of safety, you would not go into a
13 building that would have smoke. Would that be fair to say?

14 A. Right.

15 Q. Okay. In this case there was no smoke so you didn't have any
16 trouble --

17 A. No. None of the other --

18 Q. -- and you went right to the utility room --

19 A. Right.

20 Q. -- on the adjacent building there.

21 A. Um-hum.

22 Q. Okay. Tell us what you did.

23 A. We first turned off the main valves of the supply lines.

24 Once they come into the building, you turn off the supply lines,

25 and then you go to each individual meter and there's an individual

1 valve for each meter.

2 Q. I see. And in closing these valves, any trouble,
3 difficulties with the closures?

4 A. No. Very clean meter rooms.

5 Q. Okay. And they're quarter turn?

6 A. Quarter turn, um-hum.

7 Q. Okay. And how long were you in this first building? Do you
8 recall?

9 A. Oh, no, I don't recall.

10 Q. Was it minutes at the most?

11 A. Well, there were 15 meters in each room. So we had to turn
12 off 15 meters. We had to put disks. So you -- in order to put a
13 disk in a meter, you have to unloosen both sides of the meter
14 swivels, physically disconnect the meter, put a disk in each
15 meter, tighten the swivel nuts back up.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. So you're talking --

18 Q. It sounds like it would take --

19 A. I, I wrote down --

20 Q. It sounds like it takes a few minutes to do each one?

21 A. It's more than a couple minutes.

22 Q. I see.

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Okay. I wasn't familiar with the procedure.

25 A. Right.

1 Q. I'm glad you elaborated on that.

2 A. Sure.

3 Q. So it takes a few minutes for each.

4 A. Um-hum.

5 Q. It sounds like, though, it's a relatively quick shut off of
6 the main valve.

7 A. Yes, um-hum.

8 Q. And then you have to go to each meter and do each meter,
9 which might take up to several minutes here --

10 A. Right.

11 Q. -- if you have to disassemble parts of it and insert another
12 piece, a disk you were saying.

13 A. Right, uh-huh.

14 Q. And then put it back together?

15 A. Right.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Yep. That's all done to safety.

18 Q. And you logged the times of the closures of these
19 individual --

20 A. Yeah, I did keep a log of the meter numbers that were turned
21 off and the times that we were --

22 Q. I see.

23 A. -- inside those buildings, yeah.

24 Q. And would you be able to make those notes available to the
25 investigation?

1 A. I turned my paperwork over when I left the scene.

2 Q. Turned it over to whom?

3 A. Jason Rich, my supervisor.

4 Q. The supervisor.

5 A. But I think the paperwork went to the crew leader.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. The paperwork is around. I don't have it personally.

8 Q. Okay. We can pursue that elsewhere. But you didn't maintain
9 or keep that yourself?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Is that a normal procedure for you to turn the paperwork
12 over?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Okay. So you did log individually all of the meters that you
15 closed.

16 A. Right.

17 Q. And your first step was that first building; is that correct?

18 A. Right.

19 Q. What did you do after you completed the first building?

20 A. We went to the next building and the next building and the
21 next building.

22 Q. In sequence?

23 A. Right.

24 Q. Okay. Do you remember roughly how many total buildings it
25 was?

1 A. I want to say I think there were five buildings that were
2 served by that valve.

3 Q. Total of five. Okay. Great.

4 A. I believe. Yeah.

5 Q. And that took you roughly how long? An hour, 2 hours? Do
6 you remember?

7 A. I don't. I don't know, to be honest with you. I can't
8 remember.

9 Q. And did you -- you said the underground crew arrived. Did
10 they assist you in this? Were they able to --

11 A. They did.

12 Q. -- do the other buildings or how did that work?

13 A. They were basically helping with the disconnecting of the
14 meters and putting the disks in, and I was keeping track of all
15 the meter numbers and all the meter readings.

16 Q. So there was a total of four of you?

17 A. Three.

18 Q. Three of you?

19 A. Um-hum.

20 Q. Okay. That did this, okay.

21 A. Um-hum.

22 Q. And you were basically keeping the notes for the entire
23 process --

24 A. Right.

25 Q. -- is that correct? Okay. So you completed the first

1 building you went to, and then you went to the second, the third
2 and fourth and so on.

3 A. Right.

4 Q. Completing the total of up to, as best you recall, five?

5 A. Right.

6 Q. Okay. And were there any -- in closing the valves and
7 working with the meters there, were there any problems with any of
8 the meters that you came up against?

9 A. No. No, we had no problems.

10 Q. Everything was disassembled easily and put the disks in and
11 reassembled, and you just went on to the next; is that correct?

12 A. Right. That's right.

13 Q. Great. Okay. When you finished the last of the five
14 buildings, what did you do next?

15 A. I reported back to my supervisor. And then he advised me
16 that the buildings behind where the incident had occurred, the
17 fire department also wanted those buildings turned off for safety
18 because they had reported that they had seen something inside the
19 building, blue flame or something, so they wanted the gas turned
20 off there as well.

21 Q. As a precautionary measure --

22 A. Right.

23 Q. -- it sounds like?

24 A. Um-hum.

25 Q. Okay. So what did you do in response to this?

1 A. So we turned off those buildings as well. I believe -- now
2 those buildings were turned off internally. We didn't turn off
3 any other valve boxes that were outside externally.

4 Q. Okay. So --

5 A. So those -- we went into those meter rooms with the same
6 maintenance man and did the same procedures that we did for the
7 others, but in this case, where the gas was still on, we checked
8 for leaks before we turned the gas off there.

9 Q. Okay. And did you find any leaks?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Did you also use your meters on the first five building?

12 A. We had our meters on, but the gas had been turned off.

13 Q. So you were showing no meter readings?

14 A. So there was no meter readings.

15 Q. No meter readings in those first five.

16 A. Right.

17 Q. And you're saying no meter readings in the back buildings as
18 well.

19 A. In the buildings that we turned off that still had gas turned
20 on to them. Yes.

21 Q. Great. Okay, thank you. So how many buildings roughly on
22 the second group?

23 A. I think there were three different meter rooms behind that
24 building that we turned off.

25 Q. Okay. And that took you a little bit of time going through

1 that same process as well?

2 A. Right.

3 Q. Okay. And when you completed that, you were saying you
4 contacted your supervisor?

5 A. And then we also -- yeah, I went back to Jason and advised
6 him what had been done and --

7 Q. Okay. And what was his response?

8 A. "Okay. Thank you."

9 Q. Very good. So then what did you do at that point?

10 A. At that point I stood by and just took instructions.
11 Whatever they needed me to do, I did.

12 Q. And what might that involve?

13 A. There were other personnel from the gas company there at that
14 point. So they were looking at maps. My truck was kind of used
15 as the command center for the gas company. So they had maps all
16 over the place. I was just there talking to other people and
17 helping them do whatever.

18 Q. So you didn't actually need to go out and close more valves
19 or anything like that?

20 A. There was nothing else for me to do, no.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. No.

23 Q. And did the fire department request any additional support
24 from you or anybody else in the gas company that you can recall?

25 A. Not that I can recall. Not from me, at least.

1 Q. Not that you're aware of?

2 A. Right.

3 Q. Okay. Great.

4 A. Yeah, at that point there were people higher, a lot higher
5 than me from the gas company there, so they were in charge.

6 Q. Okay. At that point, Adam, how did you feel? Were you
7 pretty much tuckered out or at that point tired or?

8 A. No. I was happy.

9 Q. You were happy that you got the --

10 A. I was happy that everything went the way it did.

11 Q. -- you got the job done?

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. Okay, good. Okay. Now, so you're back at your vehicle,
14 which is functioning kind of as a command center point. You have
15 the underground crew with you. You've got the supervisor there.
16 Were there other gas company employees arriving or --

17 A. Oh, yeah. There were, but I can't, I can't tell you
18 everybody that was there, to be honest with you.

19 Q. Okay. Roughly what was the head count?

20 A. I would say it was probably at least a dozen people there
21 from Washington Gas at that point.

22 Q. So visually you could say maybe a dozen or so?

23 A. Um-hum.

24 Q. Okay, great. So at that point roughly what time was it? Do
25 you remember?

1 A. Oh, Lord. It might have been 4:00 in the morning, to be
2 honest with you.

3 Q. 4 a.m., or so?

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. Okay. So what did you do next?

6 A. When we're on scene, when we have a order where we're dealing
7 with the fire department, there's paperwork that we do that's
8 specifically for that. So at that point I was doing my own
9 paperwork. And on our computers we also complete the jobs that
10 we've done in the computer system itself. So --

11 Q. Sounds like an activity report?

12 A. Yes. I guess you could say that.

13 Q. And that's a routine process that you --

14 A. It is.

15 Q. -- do on all jobs?

16 A. Um-hum.

17 Q. Okay. And in doing that, who do you file that report with?

18 A. It just goes in the system.

19 Q. Into the system?

20 A. Now the paperwork -- is that what you're asking about?

21 Q. Well, actually -- yeah, let's make a distinction here. We've
22 got physical papers --

23 A. The paper, right.

24 Q. -- pages that you handwrite; is that correct?

25 A. Right.

1 Q. And you also have your computer display, which you can type
2 in --

3 A. Right.

4 Q. -- digitally the data that's needed to be completed in the
5 individual data boxes in the report.

6 A. Right.

7 Q. Is that correct?

8 A. That's right

9 Q. Okay. So you were doing both of those for a while?

10 A. Yeah. Yeah, I typically do the computer work first and then
11 I'll do the paperwork.

12 Q. Okay. And you filed the digital report with the system, so
13 it takes it off somewhere.

14 A. Well, we don't -- you don't do that until you leave the job.
15 Once you complete the job, then you're off-site.

16 Q. I see.

17 A. So basically you're on-site the whole time. You can do the
18 computer work, but you just don't send the job until after you're
19 gone.

20 Q. So you don't actually send it or file it until --

21 A. Right.

22 Q. -- you're actually leaving the job?

23 A. Right.

24 Q. Is that correct?

25 A. That's correct.

1 Q. Okay. Good. So you filled out your handwritten paperwork.

2 A. Um-hum.

3 Q. And you completed the data entry for the report, but didn't
4 send it.

5 A. Right.

6 Q. When you completed those two efforts, what did you do?

7 A. I basically was just on standby until I was relieved by the
8 supervisor.

9 Q. Okay. And did they request you to do any other tasks
10 specific to this job, or you were just casually conversing with
11 the others on standby awaiting if there were instructions?

12 A. There were, you know, there were belongings from some of the
13 other Washington Gas personnel there that were with my van. And
14 everybody else was doing different things so I was basically
15 securing everybody's property until I could be relieved.

16 Q. Okay. And that would be a normal process for a job like
17 this, keep an eye on all the equipment and such?

18 A. Well, I had never been a command center, so -- but for this
19 job it was, I guess, normal.

20 Q. Okay. Well, that's a good point. Had you ever encountered
21 an event such as this before in your --

22 A. No.

23 Q. -- career?

24 A. No. Not in 18 years.

25 Q. Not in 18 years. That's probably a good thing.

1 A. Yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah, I've been on a lot of fire department
2 jobs, but not --

3 Q. Nothing of this magnitude?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Okay. All right. So at some point you were able to wrap up.

6 A. Um-hum.

7 Q. Tell us about that.

8 A. I basically told everybody to have a good day, and I hit
9 send, and I drove back to the station.

10 Q. So your supervisor said, correct me if I'm wrong, said in
11 effect you can -- your duty is done here.

12 A. So you can return.

13 Q. You can return.

14 A. Um-hum.

15 Q. And where would you return to?

16 A. Rockville.

17 Q. Back to your --

18 A. Address on Nebel Street.

19 Q. Back to your shop in Rockville?

20 A. Um-hum.

21 Q. Okay. And do you remember what time roughly that was
22 when you --

23 A. Oh, no.

24 Q. -- departed the scene? That would be logged anyways --

25 A. Yeah. Yeah, it would.

1 Q. -- in your computer system?

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. I can't remember the exact time, to be honest with you.

5 Q. Okay. And when you were departing, you transmitted your
6 report, your digital report?

7 A. Um-hum.

8 Q. And what do you do with your paperwork, your actual physical
9 pages that you fill out?

10 A. We turn that in to the supervisor at the station.

11 Q. At the station back in Rockville?

12 A. Rockville, um-hum.

13 Q. Okay. So you took that paperwork back with you there --

14 A. Paperwork gets turned in, yeah. Um-hum.

15 Q. Okay. So you were told you can be dismissed from the scene
16 by your supervisor.

17 A. Um-hum.

18 Q. And you got in your truck, and then what happened?

19 A. And I drove back to the station.

20 Q. Okay. And driving back to the station, routine drive?

21 A. Um-hum. Morning traffic.

22 Q. Nothing -- morning traffic. Nothing happened. So it sounds
23 like it was maybe 5:00 or so?

24 A. Oh, no. It was later than that. I want to guesstimate that
25 it was around 6:30 when I left --

1 Q. 6:30 or so.

2 A. -- but I could be wrong.

3 Q. Okay. That's fine.

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. Just a top of the head best guess is fine.

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. We can always get that data later.

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. You got back to the Rockville shop. What did you do?

10 A. I took my boots off and put my tennis shoes on and went
11 into the station.

12 Q. Did you report to the supervisor at the station there or --

13 A. Not anything out of the ordinary. I turned my timesheet in
14 and turned in the paperwork.

15 Q. And there are other personnel at the shop there?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. The other crews that are getting ready to start their shift
19 or anybody that's at the station that's, you know, working.

20 Q. So are there underground crews that work out of this shop as
21 well?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. I see. So there would be many other employees --

24 A. Oh, yes.

25 Q. -- working out for the daytime shift at that point?

1 A. Right.

2 Q. I see. Okay. So you turn in your paperwork to whom? Do you
3 remember?

4 A. Typically there are mailboxes that we put in the --

5 Q. I see.

6 A. -- station where we -- it's just a slot.

7 Q. So you just drop it off and --

8 A. And probably with this, with this paperwork I'm pretty sure I
9 hand delivered it right to the daytime supervisor.

10 Q. Daytime supervisor.

11 A. Um-hum.

12 Q. Okay. And at that point you clocked off?

13 A. Well, when you log off your computer, typically that's when
14 you're off the clock. But, yeah.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. So I logged off, and then I went and turned in my paperwork,
17 and changed my shoes, and then I went home.

18 Q. Okay. Do you drive your truck home or you leave the truck
19 there?

20 A. No. Personal vehicle.

21 Q. Personal vehicle.

22 A. Yeah, um-hum.

23 MR. DOWNS: All right. Sounds like a pretty comprehensive
24 report. Thank you.

25 MR. WALLS: You're welcome.

1 MR. DOWNS: At this point, I'll turn the questioning over to
2 our next interview participant, Mr. Price.

3 MR. PRICE: Thank you. Steve Price for the record,
4 Washington Gas system operations.

5 I don't have much. I think that was a very comprehensive
6 description of what happened.

7 BY MR. PRICE:

8 Q. Being that this was the first incident in 18, 19 years of
9 that magnitude, the way you described your actions were very
10 methodical, if I can characterize it like that. Was there
11 anything about this scene and the magnitude of this scene that
12 caused you to vary from what your normal procedures were?

13 A. No. Typically on a building fire when we have to get the gas
14 turned off -- you know, at that point everything else that had
15 happened with the building collapse and stuff, I was more
16 concerned with the fire at that point. So it was what we -- what
17 I normally do on a fire. So there wasn't anything different or
18 anything.

19 Q. Good. Was there -- you mentioned notes regarding the meter,
20 the internal meter shut-offs that you were keeping. What's the
21 nature of those notes?

22 A. Just basically each individual meter number, the meter
23 reading, and then I would have the time that I was at that
24 building when the gas was turned off at the top of each page. It
25 was a little hand notebook that I was carrying.

1 Q. Okay. Just essentially keeping track of the actual
2 facilities that --

3 A. Right.

4 Q. -- you touched?

5 A. Right.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Yeah.

8 MR. PRICE: I don't have any further questions. Thank you
9 for the professionalism.

10 MR. WALLS: You're welcome.

11 MR. DOWNS: Thank you, Mr. Price.

12 BY MR. DOWNS:

13 Q. As we have no other participants in the interview here, we
14 have no further questions from the other players, so let me revert
15 back to you, Adam --

16 A. Sure.

17 Q. -- a little bit of your background. Okay?

18 A. Um-hum.

19 Q. How about training history regarding the training that you
20 had with the company as to what -- the type of response that
21 you're supposed to engage in an event of this type. Did you go
22 into a training program or whatever?

23 A. Washington Gas has its own internal training, yes.

24 Q. Internal training. So let's delve a little bit on that. Is
25 this the training that you would get when you first get hired?

1 A. Not necessarily, but there is training over the years. You
2 get emergency response training. There's training in operations.
3 There's all kinds of training.

4 Q. I see. So, and you've had a full regimen of training --

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. -- over the years?

7 A. Um-hum.

8 Q. Okay. Is there a prescribed schedule of training? In other
9 words, you have, say, an initial training and then recurrent
10 training, as it's called? Every year is refresher training?

11 A. Yeah, everything is dependent upon time. There's different
12 times. Some training is good for a year, some training is -- may
13 be good for a couple years.

14 Q. I see.

15 A. Some training is good for less time. So it just depends on
16 what the timeline is --

17 Q. I see.

18 A. -- is specified by the gas company.

19 Q. And at the time of the event here, were you current on all
20 the training that you were required to take?

21 A. I believe so, yes.

22 Q. Okay, very good. Prior employment. You've been with the
23 company 18 years, you say.

24 A. Um-hum.

25 Q. Did you have any employment prior to that?

1 A. I did.

2 Q. And what were you doing?

3 A. Before that, I was a pre-release inspector for a contractor
4 that did work for Washington Gas.

5 Q. Pre-release inspector?

6 A. Um-hum. So I dealt with new buildings having new lines
7 installed.

8 Q. New lines install. So you had a good -- it sounds like you
9 had a good experience from that employment in terms of the gas
10 business?

11 A. Somewhat. Maybe of the underground facilities, but not any
12 kind of emergency response or anything like that.

13 Q. I see. How long were you with that company?

14 A. Now that was just a few years. And before that I was a land
15 surveyor for 5 years.

16 Q. Land surveyor for 5 years. I see.

17 A. And that was right out of high school, so --

18 Q. I see. Okay. Roughly how many years total since high school
19 has it been?

20 A. Well, let's see. That was '92. So it's been more than a
21 couple years I'd like to admit.

22 Q. '92, '92 to 2016.

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. So that's 24 years?

25 A. Um-hum.

1 Q. Okay, very good. How about formal education?

2 A. High school graduate.

3 Q. High school. Okay, very good. Trade school or anything
4 after that?

5 A. No. I went right to work.

6 Q. So it sounds like you just had the Washington Gas training
7 that was --

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. -- specific to this particular area of expertise?

10 A. Um-hum.

11 Q. Okay. Next question. Did you happen to sustain any injury
12 in your response to the accident here?

13 A. No, I didn't.

14 Q. You were fine? No injuries or --

15 A. No injuries. Yeah.

16 Q. Okay. Were there any other Washington Gas employees who
17 sustained injury that you're aware of?

18 A. Not that I'm aware of.

19 Q. Not that you're aware of. Okay, very good.

20 Okay. Are there any other aspects or thoughts relative to
21 what occurred in the event that you'd like to -- that you'd care
22 to tell us about, come to mind?

23 A. No. I thought everything went very well. You know, because
24 of the circumstances, it could have been a lot worse if, you know,
25 a few different things had happened. But I thought everything

1 fell right into place.

2 Q. Good. Okay.

3 A. Devine intervention.

4 Q. Very good. And to wrap it up, in retrospect, in knowing what
5 you know now of this particular event, is there anything that you
6 might have done differently in your response to what occurred in
7 the accident event here?

8 A. I don't believe so.

9 Q. Okay. So there was nothing here that you might want to offer
10 to the company in terms of doing something a little bit different
11 because you had never experienced something of such a magnitude
12 before?

13 A. No. I thought the training that I had been given at
14 Washington Gas had prepared me for dealing with something like
15 this. So I don't have any recommendation for anything other than
16 to keep doing what they're doing.

17 MR. DOWNS: Very good. So if there's no further questions
18 from anybody, thank you.

19 MR. WALLS: You're welcome.

20 MR. DOWNS: This concludes the interview.

21 MR. WALLS: You're welcome.

22 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)
23
24
25

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 Adam Walls

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA16FP003

PLACE: Silver Spring, Maryland

DATE: December 8, 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.


Katherine Motley
Transcriber



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

August 3, 2017 -- transmittal via email

Mr. Adam Walls
Washington Gas Light Company
6801 Industrial Road
Springfield, VA 22151

<< a [REDACTED] h >>

Reference: NTSB Accident No. DCA16FP003, Silver Spring, MD.
Your Interview conducted on December 8, 2016.

Enclosed please find a .pdf copy of the transcript of your interview that was conducted as a part of the on-going investigation of the above referenced accident. Please printout and review the transcript for accuracy and make any necessary editorial changes on the transcript pages. Please insert your initials next to each suggested change. After your review, kindly please printout and sign the attached Endorsement page (below), and return it here (via reply email), along your marked-up transcript comments. Please note, only the individual marked-up transcript pages and the Endorsement page need to be returned to me, and it's requested that your response be provided by not later than the close of business (CoB) of August 11, 2017.

Alternately, instead of emailing your response, you are welcome to send your response documentation via US Mail, to the address below.

Please note that this transcript should be treated as confidential at this time. This transcript is for your use only, and is not for release. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. Thank you for your assistance and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Richard M. Downs, Jr., PE
Survival Factors - Technical Working Group Chairperson



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Enclosure – Transcript, and Transcript Review Endorsement


TRANSCRIPT REVIEW ENDORSEMENT

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Washington, D.C. 20594

Reference: NTSB Accident No. DCA16FP003, Silver Spring, MD.
Your Interview conducted on December 8, 2016.

I have reviewed my interview transcript from the above referenced accident, in which my response is as follows (please check the applicable box, apply signature and date):

- I have no comments to make.
- My comments are marked on the transcript attached page(s).



Adam Walls (interview witness)

08/08/17

Date

1 A. I got a phone call from my dispatcher telling me that there
 2 was an explosion with a partial building collapse with people
 3 trapped. So I then went en route to the job. Arrived at the job.
 4 Turned off my vehicle. Put my PPE on. And then I met with the
 5 firemen that were in charge of the scene, and they advised me that
 6 they needed the gas turned off. So I was able to locate the valve
 7 in the street, and we were able to turn the gas off for the fire
 8 department.

9 Q. Okay, good. That's a good overall synopsis. So let's back
 10 up a little bit, and let's kind of take it step by step of the
 11 process. Okay?

12 A. Um-hum.

13 Q. First off, you are -- you actually work out of a Washington
 14 Gas facility up there in Rockville, is it?

15 A. I did, yes.

16 Q. Okay. And what's the address of that facility?

17 A. It's 1801 Nebel Street, Rockville. *11801 is the address not 1801*

18 Q. Okay. Nebel?

19 A. Nebel, N-e-b-e-l.

20 Q. N-e-b-e-l.

21 A. Um-hum.

22 Q. Okay. And is that where all of the Washington Gas employees
 23 up in Montgomery County work out of or are there other locations?

24 A. There's another station, but that's a gas supply station.

25 Q. A gas supply. So it's not technicians --