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Subject: Local Contacts

I'm talking to some people in Sacramento at 11 about this article. What's the PG&E view of how the info-release is going, with the locals?

ENERGY
- California

SJ
Mercury News -
Bay Area leaders say PG&E falling short in providing information about gas pipeline risks

By Paul Rogers and Joshua Melvin, Oct 1

Nearly two weeks after PG&E made public the list of its Top 100 highest-risk natural gas pipelines in the Bay Area and promised to share information about them with cities, the company has yet to provide numerous basic details to local officials.

In San Jose, PG&E has refused to supply the fire department and public works officials a map showing where the shut-off valves on its transmission lines are located, or to provide information about the pressure in its pipelines, citing security concerns.

"I'm not satisfied," said San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed. "I come from the trust-but-verify school. We've got to protect the people of San Jose."

The company has yet to furnish the exact locations of three pipeline segments near North San Jose that are on the Top 100 list, so San Jose leaders still don't even know whether the pipes are located in the city limits, the county or in Milpitas.

Similar gaps are occurring in other areas.

San Carlos city officials have met twice with PG&E on the pipelines that run up the Peninsula, but Mayor Randy Royce said questions remain unanswered.

Royce, whose city has a stretch of pipe that is No. 18 on the utility's Top 100 riskiest list, said he wants to know what PG&E does with the information collected by pipeline sensors, which measure pressure and other key conditions.

"How come the information couldn't go to the fire department sooner? What do you guys do with that?" he asked. "And they didn't answer that

question."

Royce posed the inquiry during a meeting Monday with six company officials, including acting Vice President Steve Whelan, San Bruno leaders and U.S. Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Hillsborough. Royce said PG&E officials pledged to work on getting some answers.

"I don't know anything more than I did a week ago," he said. "I'll wait a week and then I'll give them a call."

Meanwhile, East Palo Alto leaders have received an apology after PG&E mistakenly didn't contact them about the city's stretch of pipe near the Dumbarton Bridge that appears on the highest-risk list.

But they haven't gotten much else, city officials said. They have met twice with the utility and so far know East Palo Alto's segment is undergoing an "engineering review" that is slated to finish by Oct. 31. Other than that it's not clear why that piece of the system is on the list, they said.

And at Stanford University, where a mile-long section of natural gas transmission line on the Top 100 list runs through campus property along Junipero Serra Boulevard, PG&E officials met with campus leaders but said they could not answer the university's questions regarding the age, maintenance history or current condition of Line 109, the 22-inch transmission main that was put on the list because of corrosion concerns.

"We got some information that was useful to us. But we didn't get all the information that we wanted," said Larry Gibbs, associate vice provost for environmental health and safety for Stanford.

Gibbs said Stanford officials provided "five or six" questions to PG&E that it expects to be answered soon.

In some cases, PG&E appears to have sent representatives to meetings with local leaders unprepared. Other times, PG&E simply refused to release information. The location of shut-off valves is one such piece of information it declined to give to Stanford as well as San Jose.

PG&E spokesman Paul Moreno said the company will not provide those maps.

"We will show a map showing the locations of pipelines and valves. But we don't leave the map behind for security reasons," Moreno said. "It's about the public having information like this. Gas lines and electric transmission lines are major infrastructure."

Shut-off valves on major natural gas lines have become a central issue in the debate over the Sept. 9 explosion in San Bruno that killed eight people and destroyed 37 homes. PG&E said it took its crews 1 hour and 46 minutes to turn off the gas as it surged like a blowtorch, melting cars, incinerating homes and forcing fire crews to retreat. PG&E crews had to drive through traffic, go down manholes and open locked buildings, then crank two huge valves by hand.

Speier and U.S. Sens.

Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer have introduced legislation to require automatic or remote shut-off valves on gas lines in populated areas.

PG&E's Moreno said

the utility is working hard to provide as much information to local fire departments and city leaders as it can. He noted that only trained PG&E workers, not fire crews, are legally allowed to turn off transmission line valves.

But San Jose's Reed

said he wants the information so that his city doesn't do anything to impede access to them. After a 1981 gas main break in San Francisco that forced 30,000 people to evacuate, for instance, investigators found that the city had paved asphalt over a shut-off valve three years earlier. Reed said he also wants more oversight of PG&E, particularly on how it maintains its shut-off valves.

"I want to know where

they are, what condition they are in, and how they work," Reed said. "It's not that we are going to turn them off, but I want to know what PG&E knows. If they are doing it right, great, and if not, we'll have to lean on them."

Another meeting

between San Jose leaders and PG&E is scheduled for Wednesday.