

From: Cooke, Michelle
Sent: 8/1/2011 7:49:57 AM
To: Horner, Trina (/O=PG&E/OU=CORPORATE/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=TNHC);
Dowdell, Jennifer (/O=PG&E/OU=CORPORATE/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=JKD5)
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: Fw: SFGate: San Bruno pipe inspection halted over odor

Trina and Jennifer- just for future reference, the little hiccup Saturday is something that would be useful for me to know before reading about it in the paper.

Thank you,

Michelle

From: Shori, Sunil
Sent: Sunday, July 31, 2011 11:28 PM
To: Cooke, Michelle; Halligan, Julie; Prosper, Terrie D.; Clanon, Paul
Subject: RE: SFGate: San Bruno pipe inspection halted over odor

Richard Kuprewicz, the Redmond, Washington based pipeline safety consultant, is offering incorrect opinions without knowing any of the facts.

I've been at the excavation site since Thursday and have seen gas detecting equipment being used to constantly detect gas levels within the excavation. I was at the site on Saturday when, after installing a small test valve on the portion of Line 132 abandoned in 1956, detection equipment readings showed gas amounts in the line to be at levels well below the flammable range. This allowed for removal of the welded seal on the line so camera equipment could be put into the line to inspect it. As the seal was removed a strong odor was noticed from mercaptans in the liquids that had been left in the line when it was abandoned. Prevailing winds carried the concentrated odorant into the nearby area, but at all times the gas detection equipment continued to indicate the presence of gas levels, even at the opening of the pipe itself, to be at extremely low levels (approximately 1/1000% gas-in-air).

A plastic cap was installed on the line and work was stopped after several people expressed concern over the odor. I spoke with some residents who asked me about the smell of gas. I explained to them what was causing the smell and told them about the extremely low levels of gas the detection equipment was indicating. Most residents understood and appreciated the information I provided.

The odor of gas in the area soon dissipated; however, a decision was made, with the concurrence of all parties, to continue with the work on Tuesday. On Monday, PG&E will canvass the entire area surrounding the line and provide residents with updated letters indicating the possibility of the smell of gas. PG&E will also have more gas service representatives available in the area when the work resumes on Tuesday.

From: michelle [mailto:mlc@cpuc.ca.gov]
Sent: Sun 7/31/2011 7:08 PM
To: Halligan, Julie; Shori, Sunil; Prosper, Terrie D.; Clanon, Paul
Subject: SFGate: San Bruno pipe inspection halted over odor

Sunil and Julie- what do we know about this? Michelle

This article was sent to you by someone who found it on SFGate.
The original article can be found on SFGate.com here:
<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2011/07/31/BAI41KHGSM.DTL>

Sunday, July 31, 2011 (SF Chronicle)
San Bruno pipe inspection halted over odor
Jaxon Van Derbeken, Chronicle Staff
Writer

(07-31) 16:00 PDT SAN BRUNO -- Pacific Gas and Electric Co. shut down a state-ordered inspection of an abandoned natural gas pipeline in San Bruno after both the crew and neighbors noticed a strong gas odor, officials said today.

The utility had dug up an 8-foot piece of pipe that was part of a section that had not been used since 1956. That's when the transmission line was rerouted to make way for San Bruno's Crestmoor subdivision - the neighborhood where the line ruptured on Sept. 9, killing eight people and destroying 38 homes.

The state Public Utilities Commission ordered the inspection of the abandoned line as part of its probe into the disaster. It ordered PG&E to inspect 250 feet of the 1948-vintage pipe using an in-line camera able to detect weld problems.

Work was continuing near the blast site after 9 a.m. on Saturday, at the intersection of Glenview and Claremont drives, when the crew first detected the odor, PG&E spokesman Andrew Souvall said.

"They smelled it immediately after they unsealed the pipe," he said.

Souvall blamed residual odor from the chemical added to gas to make its smell detectible, known as mercaptan. He said the unsealing of the old line only released the odorant, not natural gas.

"It was just the chemical - they didn't find any gas in the pipeline, it was just the odorant," Souvall said.

Souvall said the pipe was resealed immediately, with work expected to resume after neighbors are briefed about the issue. The work was stopped about two hours after the odor was released. "They never conducted the work - the camera was never put in the line," Souvall said.

One expert on such pipelines said today that it may not have been flushed of natural gas properly at the time it was decommissioned. The odorant, he said, would not remain separate from the gas.

"They don't have a line full of odorant, that's ridiculous," said Richard Kuprewicz, a Redmond, Wash.-based pipeline safety consultant. "I'm sorry, I just don't buy this. If you purged the whole thing in the first place, you wouldn't have odorant." E-mail Jaxon Van Derbeken at jvanderbeken@sfchronicle.com. -----

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