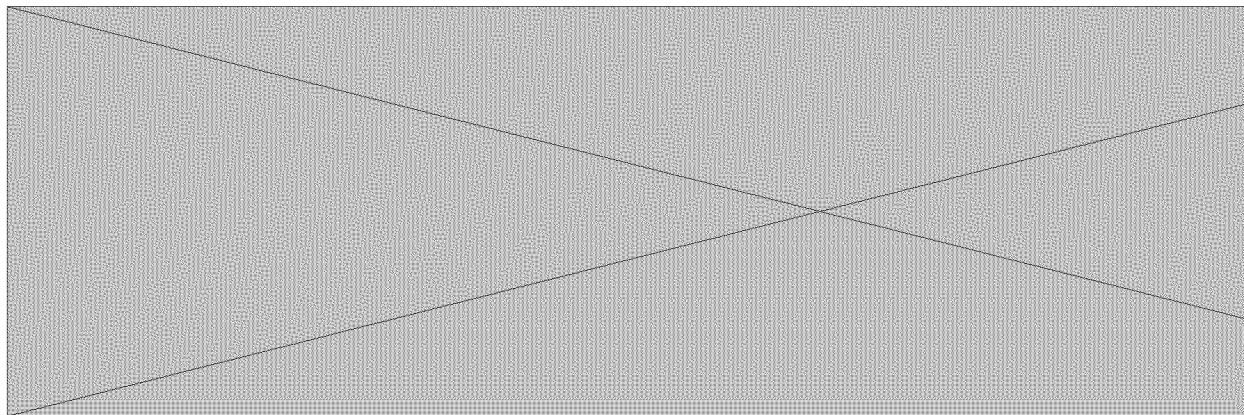


From: Cherry, Brian K
Sent: 10/4/2011 5:25:12 PM
To: pac@cpuc.ca.gov (pac@cpuc.ca.gov)
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: FW: Letters heading our way on Plastic Pipe

Here is the press announcement of the event tomorrow. The advisory notes that he will attend the CPUC mtg on Thursday, but that was incorrect according to staff. He is attending the Commission mtg on Oct 20. Office of

Assemblymember Jerry Hill – Media Advisory
Contact: Aurelio Rojas, Communications Director, 916-319-2019 or 916-747-3199 cell



Jerry Hill to Unveil Safety Legislation At Cupertino Condo Complex Damaged By Natural Gas Plastic Pipe Explosion

***Bill Would Require CPUC to Implement Federal
Recommendations***

What:

Assemblyman Jerry Hill will be joined by Assemblyman Paul Fong, D-Cupertino, Cupertino Mayor Gilbert Wong and members of the Northpoint Homeowners Association at a news conference at a Cupertino condominium complex where a unit was destroyed Aug. 31 by an explosion caused by a leaking Pacific Gas & Electric Co. plastic pipe.

During the 1990s, three major explosions caused by leaks in similar polyethylene pipes killed 40 people and led the National Transportation Safety Board to recommend that operators replace or develop a plan to phase out this type of pipe. PG&E and the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) never acted on the NTSB recommendations – just as they ignored a series of other federal safety recommendations before last year’s fatal San Bruno explosion.

“My legislation will ensure that regulators at the CPUC take action on safety recommendations from the federal government instead of ignoring them, which is what current law allows,” Hill said.

Assemblyman Hill, who represents San Bruno, is introducing legislation that would require the CPUC to implement NTSB safety recommendations. PG&E operates thousands of miles of potentially brittle plastic distribution pipes similar to the two-inch pipe that exploded in Cupertino and ignited a fire that burned for more than 90 minutes.

Last week, a four-inch plastic pipe ruptured at an intersection in Roseville, sparking six-foot-high flames that took PG&E nearly seven hours to extinguish. In both instances, the pipe was made of low-ductile inner wall “Aldyl A” piping manufactured before 1973 by DuPont. Co.

When:

Wednesday, Oct. 5, 2011

10:30 a.m.

Where:

20299 Northwest Square

Northpoint Condominium complex, Cupertino

Members of the media should enter on Blue Jay Drive from Homestead Road. Parking available on Northwest Square.

Contact:

Aurelio Rojas, Communications Director, 916-319-2019 or 916-747-3199 cell

Background:

Plastic piping is widely used on natural gas distribution lines and, until the mid-1990s, had been accepted as a safe and economical alternative to other materials.

During the 1990s, three major explosions -- all caused by leaks in polyethylene pipe -- resulted in the combined deaths of 40 people nationwide. These explosions led the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) to conduct a 1998 special investigation that concluded certain plastic pipe installed in the natural gas distribution system between the 1960s and early 1980s was vulnerable to brittle-like cracking, which could result in gas leakage and threaten public safety. The standards used to measure the strength of the plastic pipe overrated the strength and resistance of the material. NTSB found that, on average, brittle-like cracks were the "second most frequent failure mode for older plastic piping, exceeded only by excavation damage." NTSB recommended that the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) require operators to locate and either replace or develop a plan to phase out this type of piping.

In 2002 and 2007, the PHMSA released an updated advisory bulletin to utilities concerning the vulnerability of older polyethylene pipe to premature brittle-like cracking. PHMSA expressed concern that adequate information regarding the location of the flawed plastic piping did not exist.

On Thursday, Assemblyman Hill will appear at a meeting of the CPUC to encourage the commission to take action on federal gas pipeline safety recommendations from the 1990s that have not been acted on and the recently released San Bruno explosion recommendations. Hill will also address specific issues related to the San Bruno explosion pending before the CPUC, including utility requests to increase pipeline pressure and utility requests to have ratepayers pick up 90 percent of the cost for improving the safety of the aging gas transmission lines.

“The NTSB has accused PG&E of having ‘exploited weaknesses’ in government pipeline regulations ‘to the detriment of public safety’ and the CPUC has been heavily criticized by the NTSB for inadequately supervising PG&E,” Hill said. “My legislation will force the CPUC to be better regulators since they’ve been unable to adequately protect Californians and hold utilities accountable.”

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