

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

RESPONSE OF COLUMBIA GAS OF MASSACHUSETTS TO THE
FIRST SET OF INFORMATION REQUESTS FROM THE D.P.U.
PIPELINE ENGINEERING AND SAFETY DIVISION

D.P.U. 19-PL-07 – Merrimack Valley Incident (9/13/18)

Date: September 26, 2019

Responsible: Kathy Silver, Manager Operations Compliance

- IR-PL-1-19: Please provide the following information related to emergency response for the incident, including information from time of incident (approximately 1600 on September 13, 2018) until commencement of purging operations (September 21, 2018):
- a) Names of the Incident Command Team that was implemented (if different than IR-PL 1-15(a));
 - b) Contact list of company personnel at the time of incident (if different than IR-PL 1-15(b));
 - c) Actual list of remote command centers used for the incident (if different than IR-PL 1-15(f));
 - d) List of emergency equipment at the command center at the time of incident and what additional equipment was found to be needed throughout the emergency response;
 - e) Name, title, and company, responsibilities for all personnel involved in the emergency response; and
 - f) Description of how overpressurization emergency response (Section 3.9) was adhered to and documented throughout the emergency response.

Response:

- a) In immediate response to the event, the Manager of the Lawrence Operations Center appointed the Field Operations Leader to serve as the Incident Commander, and other resources were assigned to manage other aspects of the event. See Attachment-IR-PL-1-19(a) for the internal briefings that occurred in which resources were assigned to manage initial aspects of the event.

On September 14, 2018, the Chairman Orders under G.L.c. 25, § 4B directed NSTAR Gas Company to take management control over the restoration efforts related to all gas pipeline issues in Lawrence, Andover, and North Andover. See Attachment-IR-PL-1-19(b) for the Chairman Orders dated September 14, 2018.

Upon assuming lead for the restoration, NSTAR Gas Company implemented their Incident Command Structure to manage the incident, and Columbia resources were assigned to each of the NSTAR Incident Command Structure positions with the ultimate goal of transitioning management of the incident back to Columbia.

On September 21, 2018, NSTAR Gas Company fully transferred restoration responsibilities back to the Company. The Columbia Incident Command Team structure is provided in Attachment-IR-PL-1-19(c).

- b) The contact list of the Company personnel referenced in IR-PL 1-15 Attachment-IR-PL-1-15(b) applied during the incident. In addition see the response to IR-PL-1-19(c) for the contact information for the incident command team.
- c) The Company initially leveraged 55 Marston Street, Lawrence as its command center which is referenced as a potential command center location in Attachment IR-PL-1-15(f). The command center was also documented in the initial briefings. See Attachment IR-PL-1-19(a). Emergency responders and local and state government resources established a temporary emergency command center at a vacant Showcase Cinemas parking lot off Winthrop Avenue in Lawrence, MA in the hours following the incident on September 13, 2018.
- d) The list of emergency equipment at the 55 Marston Street command center at the time of incident is included in response to IR-PL-15, Attachment-IR-PL-1-15(g). As the incident evolved, the Company procured additional equipment to scale up its response to the event including but not limited to pods, trailers, telecommunications and equipment brought in by mutual aid resources.
- e) Enclosed as Attachment IR-PL-1-19(d) is a list of company personnel who were primarily involved in isolating or shutting down the affected low-pressure distribution system, closing service meters, or evacuating buildings during approximately the first 24 hours of the incident.
- f) Upon being notified of the over-pressurization, the NiSource Incident Commander directed and coordinated efforts by personnel from Distribution, M&R, and Engineering to isolate and shut down the affected low-pressure distribution system. The Company shut down the Winthrop regulator station by about 4:30 p.m., within 25 minutes of being notified, and shut down the entire low-pressure distribution system by 7:17 p.m. on September 13, 2018. For more information about the shutdown process, see the response to IR-PL-1-20(a)-(c). Throughout the shutdown process, the Incident Commander communicated directly or through a representative with various Company personnel and public emergency management officials. The Incident Commander was in regular communication with the CMA Manager of Communications, who in turn conveyed information to the NiSource Communications Team. The Incident Commander (and/or his representatives) also held regular status calls with Company stakeholders.

At all times during the response to the over-pressurization, adequate personnel, materials and equipment, and other resources were available to isolate and shut down the system.

Relevant documentation generated during the Company's response to the over-pressurization includes: Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition ("SCADA") data from the two telemetry stations in the affected distribution system; ERX Audit Trail reports; the Incident Commander's log of valve closures; the Incident Commander's log of pressure readings at the system extremities; Telephonic Incident Notification Reports reflecting reports made to the Department; and emails documenting Incident Reports made to the National Response Center.

The Company communicated with the general public and the media through various means during the response to the over-pressurization. Beginning at approximately 9:00 p.m. on September 13, the Company periodically posted updates about the incident to its website, Facebook page, and Twitter feed. The Company also communicated updates using customer email addresses where available. Company personnel directed media inquiries to the NiSource Communications Team.

The Company submitted seven people for drug and alcohol testing on September 13: the two NiSource gas controllers who were on duty at the time of the over-pressurization alarms and the five members of the construction crew who had been working at the Salem Street tie-in site at the time of the over-pressurization.

The over-pressurization damaged the integrity of the affected distribution system. After consulting with the Department, the Company determined that it was necessary to replace the affected system's cast-iron main before restoring service to affected customers. On September 16, 2018, the Company announced its commitment to a complete replacement of the majority of the affected gas distribution system. The Company announced the completion of the gas pipeline construction work on October 30, 2018.



**THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITIES**

CHARLES D. BAKER
GOVERNOR

KARYN E. POLITO
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

MATTHEW A. BEATON
SECRETARY OF ENERGY
AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

ONE SOUTH STATION
BOSTON, MA 02110
(617) 305-3500

ANGELA M. O'CONNOR
CHAIRMAN

ROBERT E. HAYDEN
COMMISSIONER

CECILE M. FRASER
COMMISSIONER

September 14, 2018

President Stephen Bryant
Bay State Gas Company d/b/a Columbia Gas of Massachusetts
4 Technology Drive, Suite 250
Westborough, MA 01581

RE: Chairman Orders under G.L. c. 25, § 4B

Dear President Bryant,

Pursuant to section 4B of chapter 25 of the General Laws, Governor Baker has granted me the authority to take such action as I consider necessary to assure public safety and welfare through the priority restoration or continuing availability of gas, electric and water utility services. NSTAR Gas Company, d/b/a Eversource Energy, has offered and I direct NSTAR Gas Company to take prudent management control over the restoration efforts related to all gas pipeline issues in Lawrence, Andover, and North Andover. Further, I issue the following orders:

- Columbia Gas of Massachusetts shall provide complete financial and personnel support to NSTAR Gas Company and shall reimburse NSTAR Gas Company for all its costs incurred within 90 days of the receipt of invoices; and
- Columbia Gas of Massachusetts shall immediately provide NSTAR Gas Company with all information and resources, including equipment, property and other assets, as I deem necessary in coordination with NSTAR Gas Company.

Chairman Orders

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If Columbia Gas of Massachusetts fails to carry out any of these orders, it will be assessed penalties up to \$1,000,000 per violation.

Sincerely,

/s/ Angela M. O'Connor

Angela M. O'Connor
Chairman

cc: NSTAR Gas Company, d/b/a Eversource