

From: [Ries, Jennifer](#)
To: [Ashley Horton](#)
Cc: [Sara Lyons](#)
Subject: Re: Disclosure of Information prior to Community Meeting - Jackson MS - PLD24FR003
Date: Friday, April 19, 2024 11:34:50 AM

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Ashley,

Atmos Energy does not agree that release of the requested information meets the criteria set forth in 49 U.S.C. 1114(b). The homeowner's statement and the information on leaks lack important context, does not advance any health and safety objective, and does not meet NTSB information quality standards of completeness and accuracy.

With respect to the statement that the customer on Bristol reported a strong smell of gas near the water box in November 2023, as previously shared with the NTSB, a qualified Atmos Energy technician promptly responded to the customer's call and conducted a thorough leak investigation. He took readings and found no gas at the meter, the riser adjacent to the house, in the sewer, around the house, or along the driveway. He noted an investigation from three days earlier when a leak nearly 50 feet from the structure was identified by a qualified third-party technician during a scheduled leak survey. Both the Atmos Energy technician and the contractor technician confirmed there was no gas migration from that leak, which was scheduled for future repair in a shorter time frame than required by federal or state regulation. Making a statement about the customer smelling gas without a full explanation of the events surrounding Atmos Energy's response is misleading. In addition to not meeting the NTSB's information quality standards of completeness and accuracy, we do not see how disclosing the homeowner's statement, even with the appropriate context, would serve to "protect health and safety".

With respect to the open below-ground Grade 2 and 3 leaks as of 1/24/2024 (in both South Jackson and within the 5-mile radius), the disclosure of these leaks does not meet the threshold for disclosure at this time because they do not reflect a public safety concern and do not warrant premature dissemination out of context prior to the conclusion of the NTSB investigation. The NTSB's Preliminary Report states that such leaks were classified by Atmos Energy according to Gas Piping Technology Committee's standards as non-hazardous at the time of detection and either scheduled for future repair and/or monitoring. There is no evidence or even suggestion that these leaks were causal to the incident. Dissemination of selective information prematurely will only create a misimpression that the information is related to cause when such connection has not been made or is warranted. Again, the lack of completeness and accuracy does not meet the NTSB's information quality standard and falls far short of the threshold for release under the statute.

For context, Atmos Energy had conducted scheduled leak surveys in November and December 2023 during which any Grade 1 leak was immediately repaired and any Grade 2 or 3

leak was scheduled for future repair in shorter time frames than required by federal or state regulation. This includes the two leaks referenced in the NTSB's preliminary report which showed no migration at the time of detection. Atmos Energy typically sees an increase in Grade 2 or 3 leaks scheduled for repair following such surveys, particularly when such surveys are conducted using Advanced Mobile Leak Detection (AML D) technology which is 1,000 times more sensitive than traditional technologies. Out of context, the release of information that requires an understanding of leak grading and the regulatory requirements for identifying, grading, and repairing hazardous and non-hazardous leaks could cause unnecessary misunderstanding and unfounded concern among members of the public.

As part of its emergency response to the incidents, Atmos Energy took immediate action to closely monitor system safety and reliability, including a review of open leaks. Atmos Energy brought in additional crews from other divisions, as well as contractor resources, to support leak survey and system monitoring efforts, and also to accelerate leak repair and pipe replacement work.

As Atmos Energy moved beyond emergency response work, the work of leak surveying, monitoring, accelerated leak repair and pipe replacement continues today across areas of Jackson and the state of Mississippi. Of the open below-ground leaks as of 1/24/2024 within the five-mile radius, 100% of the grade 2s and 69% of grade 3s have been repaired, and the remaining leaks are scheduled for timely repair.

Finally, with respect to the house fire at 4838 Westhaven Dr. in Jackson, MS, on Feb 15, 2024, the email sent to you on March 14 provides an explanation of the events leading up to the house fire. The issue involved a shut-off valve on the riser that came apart shortly after a technician tightened a nut to resolve an above-ground fizz leak. The escaping gas ignited and a structure caught fire, but there were no injuries or fatalities and the estimated property damage and the gas loss were below the reporting thresholds in 49 CFR 191. Rickey Cotton of the MS PSC was promptly notified. This was an isolated event where the cause was known and there were no broader impacts to the system or to public safety. This event did not meet the criteria for a reportable incident, so it was not called in to the NRC.

Thank you,

Jennifer

From: Ashley Horton [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, April 17, 2024 12:43 PM
To: Ries, Jennifer [REDACTED]
Cc: Sara Lyons [REDACTED]
Subject: [EXT] RE: Disclosure of Information prior to Community Meeting - Jackson MS - PLD24FR003

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Energy. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

In addition to the information requested to be released below, we would also like agreement to disclose:

3. In South Jackson, around the accident sites, there were 120 known belowground leaks on Atmos' assets (representing 128 miles of main). None were classified by Atmos as Grade 1 (hazardous).

Bates number: JXN-NTSB-000516 (Map of Open Grade 2 and 3 belowground leaks)

Please provide whether you agree at the same time you respond to the request below. Thanks!

Ashley Horton

Pipeline Investigator

Office of Railroad, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Investigations

National Transportation Safety Board

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: Ashley Horton

Sent: Wednesday, April 17, 2024 11:49 AM

To: Ries, Jennifer [REDACTED]

Cc: Sara Lyons [REDACTED]

Subject: Disclosure of Information prior to Community Meeting - Jackson MS - PLD24FR003

Jennifer,

We are seeking agreement to release the information contained in the relevant documents cited below for the community meeting in Jackson, MS, next week. The NTSB is authorized by 49 U.S.C. 1114(b) to disclose, under certain circumstances, confidential commercial information that would otherwise be subject to penalties for disclosure under the Trade Secrets Act or excepted from disclosure under FOIA.

Information requested to be released:

1. On 11/20/2023, the homeowner reported a strong smell of gas near water box.

Bates number: JXN-NTSB-001468-001469 (185 Bristol Odor calls (5 years))

2. As of 1/24/2024, in a 5-mile radius around the city of Jackson, there were 289 known belowground leaks on Atmos' asset (representing 770 miles of main). None were classified by Atmos as Grade 1 (hazardous).

Bates number: JXN-NTSB-000853 (Map of Known Leaks on 1-24-2024 in 5 Mile Radius)

Additionally, pertaining to the house fire at 4838 Westhaven Dr. in Jackson, MS, on Feb 15, 2024 – please confirm why the event did not meet reporting threshold and why Atmos did not consider it to be “an event that is significant in the judgment of the operator, even though it did not meet the

criteria of paragraph (1) or (2) of this definition” under 49 CFR 191.3 “Incident”.

Please respond whether you agree with the information disclosure, and your written response to the second question, as soon as possible, **but no later than April 19th at 12:00 PM CT.**

Thank you for your help!

Ashley Horton

Pipeline Investigator

Office of Railroad, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Investigations

National Transportation Safety Board

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]