

## **NY State Leak & Odor Response Procedure Guidelines**

An Ad Hoc committee was created by the NY Advisory Committee, in concert with the New York State Public Service Commission, to evaluate the various New York Utilities' leak response procedures for the purpose of identifying actions that would need to be included in a Company's Leak Response procedure. The overarching goal of the committee's charge was to advance early awareness of conditions that might indicate a more serious hazard so as to respond quickly and with the appropriate company and non-company emergency responders. Additionally, the committee felt strongly that a company's procedures should provide guidance as to the sequence of steps that need to be taken early in a leak investigation to mitigate a serious hazard as quickly as possible.

### **Odor Response Calls to the Company Call Center:**

Discussions on the questions companies initially ask (scripts) when they receive customer odor complaint calls. The committee agrees that another committee should be convened to determine:

1. Best practices related to Company's call scripts
2. Triggers for additional responders via a company's call scripts.
3. "Decision trees" where a caller's key responses would drive subsequent questions. The goal being to minimize the time spent on the call, while obtaining necessary information to gauge the proper response level and expedite dispatch of company/non-company responders.
4. If/when a call has been received from a reliable source
5. Key words/phrases that can raise the sense of urgency

### **Definition:**

**Reliable Source:** A Company Employee, Company Contractor Employee, Fire Department, Police Department, and/or Other Emergency Response Personnel from a City/State/Federal/Municipal Agency, and a School or Hospital Official.

### **Odor Response Calls at Dispatch Center:**

Dispatchers should express the proper sense of urgency if/when appropriate, and provide as much information as possible to crews as conditions warrant. Additionally, each company shall identify specific triggers in their specifications in order to immediately initiate the dispatch of additional company and/or outside agency response, for example:

1. The report of a strong odor of gas reported by a reliable source at the scene.
2. Combined electric and gas event when known. (**See NOTE below**)
3. The report of a gas explosion from a reliable source at the scene.
4. Sustained general atmospheric readings in more than one building.
5. Inside and outside damages.

**NOTE:** For Dual Utilities – establish a process to provide gas first responders with electric subsurface information before or immediately upon arrival at the scene.

For utilities that share service territory - a process must be developed to provide first responders with electric subsurface information when gas readings are detected. For example, sharing of maps or a direct line to emergency dispatch center where such information could be provided.

### **Inside Investigation:**

A company's procedures shall include, at a minimum, the requirement to evacuate if there is a sustained atmospheric gas reading  $\geq$  1% gas-in-air that cannot be immediately identified and made safe at the source. Additionally, companies should consider including the following in their procedures:

1. Test for the atmospheric presence of natural gas.
2. Quickly determine source and isolate if possible.
3. Ventilate if possible.
4. Test all possible entries into building:
  - Floor drains
  - Electric/telephone ducts
  - Water service
  - Cracks in foundation wall
  - Evacuate if necessary
  - Check other buildings – describe pattern and/or quantity to be checked
  - Check meter dials for gas usage
5. Triggers for when to initiate the dispatch of additional assistance (Company and/or outside agencies, i.e. Fire Department) for example:
  - Gas readings found in three or more buildings.
  - Atmospheric readings that cannot be quickly reduced below 0.5% or eliminated and are in multi-family buildings.

### **Outside Investigation:**

A company's procedures shall include the following requirements:

1. Speak with person who made initial call, if at all possible, to determine where he/she first noticed the odor.
2. If the leak investigation leads the investigator to check inside buildings, i.e. gas readings in sub-surface structures, strong odor and/or high readings in unpaved areas, perform an investigation inside the building where the call originated.
3. Take readings along curb lines, foundation walls and subsurface structures. Additional checks should be performed in continuously paved areas.
4. Ventilate sub-surface structures ("SSS") that have type-1 gas readings prior to performing any additional leak investigation tasks and, then, immediately gain access to buildings adjacent to the structure on each side of the street.

5. Define what buildings are to be checked whenever gas readings are obtained in any nearby SSS's.
6. Where it is unknown which buildings are fed from a subsurface structure, company procedures shall quantify the number of buildings that require an inside investigation or determine the buildings based on their proximity to the effected subsurface structures.
7. Triggers for when to call for additional assistance (Company and/or outside agencies, i.e. Fire Department), for example:
  - High readings (4% or greater) found in two or more subsurface structures
  - Company first responder identifies strong atmospheric gas odor upon arrival.
  - Subsurface structures with high readings (greater than 4%) that cannot be vented.
  - Vented subsurface structures that do not quickly fall below 4%.