

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 18, 2018

Stephen H. Bryant
President and Chief Operating Officer
Columbia Gas of Massachusetts
4 Technology Drive
Westborough, MA 01581

James J. Judge
Chairman, President, and Chief Executive Officer
Eversource Energy
300 Cadwell Drive
Springfield, MA 01104

Dear Mr. Bryant and Mr. Judge,

We write regarding the communication by Columbia Gas and Eversource during the ongoing effort to allow Massachusetts residents to return to their homes in a safe and expeditious manner, following the explosions and fires that occurred on Thursday, September 13 in the Merrimack Valley area. On Friday, September 14, Governor Charlie Baker declared a state of emergency and authorized Eversource to take over the recovery efforts.¹ When residents are told they may return to their homes, it is imperative that it is in fact safe to do so, that they can have any safety-related questions answered promptly, and that any potential safety issues are resolved immediately. For the ongoing restoration efforts, it is important that residents have confidence that Columbia Gas and Eversource understand exactly whose gas service is still on and whose gas service has to be turned off.

Columbia Gas reported that the disaster impacted 8,600 gas customers in the region,² and Phase 1 of the response should have involved the shut off all 8,600 gas meters. Technicians reportedly entered each of these residences to ensure they were clear of natural gas. At 6:30 a.m. on September 16, Eversource, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), and public safety officials announced that residents who had previously evacuated could return to their homes. According to both Eversource and MEMA, gas utility officials had checked and cleared all impacted gas meters.

¹ *Governor Baker Declares State of Emergency Regarding Incidents in Lawrence, Andover and North Andover*, Office of Governor Charlie Baker (Sep. 14, 2018), <https://www.mass.gov/news/governor-baker-declares-state-of-emergency-regarding-incidents-in-lawrence-andover-and-north>.

² *Incident in Merrimack Valley*, Columbia Gas of Massachusetts (Sept. 14, 2018), <https://www.columbiagasma.com/en/merrimack-valley-incident/previous-statements>.

Eversource has also reported that there are an additional 5,800 customers who were not in the affected area but who had either turned their gas off themselves or had their gas turned off by first responders or utility workers.³ These customers outside of the affected area are reportedly having their gas service restored.

There is widespread confusion over whose homes were affected by the incident. This lack of clarity is amplified by the fact that company officials have said that it is possible that one house might currently have gas service and the house next door to it on the same street might not. Residents have reported that there were no notifications sent by Columbia Gas to customers letting them know if their homes were impacted, either by email or by phone. This could lead to a situation where residents may not know whether or not it is safe for them to be receiving gas and create additional confusion.

It is imperative that Eversource and Columbia Gas know exactly whose homes should and should not have gas service, and then communicate that effectively to the residents. Your companies must also respond to requests for information or re-inspection from residents in the affected community immediately, and provide more frequent and detailed updates to the impacted communities.

Please also provide answers to the following questions by the close of business on Thursday, September 20, 2018:

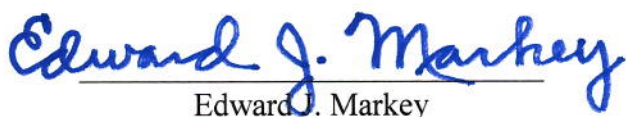
1. Is your company maintaining a database of homes and buildings that have been inspected? If yes, to whom is it available and accessible? If not, why not?
2. Is your company maintaining a detailed map of the affected area, including which houses and buildings on each street should have their gas service turned off? If so, please provide this map to our offices. If not, why not?
3. Please describe how your company is determining which homes and buildings on streets within the area that was evacuated are safe to receive gas and which have their service turned off.
4. Please describe what steps you are taking to ensure that homes and buildings that are supposed to have had their service turned off have actually been serviced.
5. If a customer lives or works in what they believe to be an affected area but their gas is still on, what should they do? How fast can they expect a response?
6. Please describe how you are communicating with residents in the affected areas to keep them apprised of the individual situation for their home or business and any ongoing or future work that may affect them or their area.

³ *Lawrence, Andover, North Andover Updates*, Eversource (Sept. 18, 2018), <https://www.eversource.com/content/ema-c/residential/outages/experiencing-a-problem/lawrence-andover-north-andover-incident-response>.

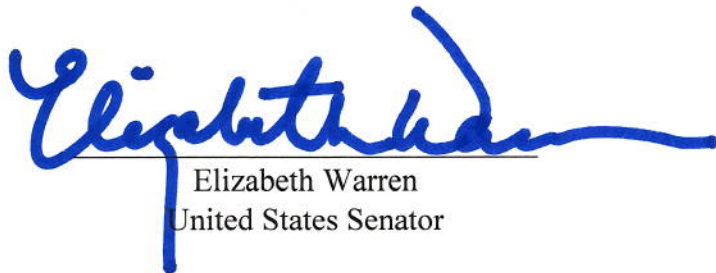
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We look forward to your prompt responses to these questions. Should you have any questions about this letter, please contact Morgan Gray in Senator Markey's office at 202-224-2742.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator