

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 21, 2018

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

Dear Mr. Bryant,

We write with additional questions surrounding the continued efforts of Columbia Gas of Massachusetts to restore gas service following the disaster in Lawrence, Andover, and North Andover on September 13 in which 25 people were injured, one was killed, and 8,600 homes and businesses were left without gas service for an as-yet-undetermined period of time. It is imperative that we understand what actions Columbia Gas is taking to ensure the safety of its pipeline system in all other areas of the state.

We understand that the company has other low-pressure natural gas distribution systems in Massachusetts, in addition to newer medium-pressure systems that may have a maximum allowable operating pressure of up to 99 pounds per square inch.

1. Please detail existing low-pressure gas distribution systems that Columbia Gas operates in Massachusetts, including which communities and how many meters in the state are covered by these systems.
2. Is Columbia Gas currently conducting any work to uprate – increase the operating pressure – of any of these low-pressure distribution systems in Massachusetts or planning to do so at any time before the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) incident report is released?
3. It is our understanding that Columbia Gas has recently revised its operating procedures guidance, which would strengthen procedures on this sort of work upgrading the pipeline system. Please provide a copy of that updated guidance and note what revisions have been made.

According to NTSB Chairman Robert Sumwalt, the NTSB investigation is focusing on a pressure increase that may be linked to pressure sensors that were on a gas line taken out of service.¹ This would have happened at the same time as previously announced upgrades that Columbia Gas reported would be taking place in the area.

4. Who was the contractor (or contractors) performing the work on the affected pipeline system?

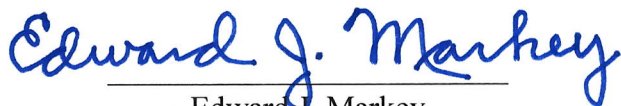
¹ *Official: Pressure sensors focus of gas explosions probe*, Associated Press (Sept. 16, 2018), <https://apnews.com/185462c04eec450083ee649d957ef07c>.

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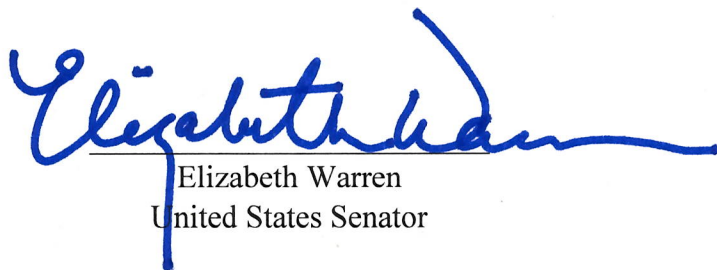
5. What work was being done by that contractor or contractors at that location?
6. Is this contractor performing any other work for Columbia Gas on any other part of its pipeline system in Massachusetts, including any other upgrade work that may be occurring in other service areas?
7. Has Columbia Gas confirmed that this contractor was qualified to perform its tasks, as required under 49 CFR §192.805?
8. Please provide a copy of Columbia Gas' Operator Qualification Plan, as described in the Distribution Integrity Management Plan Section 8.2.4.1?

Please provide responses to the questions above by the close of business on September 24, 2018. It is critical that the people of Massachusetts are assured that Columbia Gas' operations in all other areas of the state are safe and that it has taken immediate action to help ensure that no similar disaster occur elsewhere. Should you have any questions about this letter, please contact Morgan Gray in the office of Senator Markey at 202-224-2742.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator