

**STATE OF MISSOURI
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

At a session of the Public Service
Commission held at its office in
Jefferson City on the 23rd day of
August, 2005.

In the Matter of an Investigation into Natural Gas)	
Incidents in Unionville and Milan, Missouri, on)	
Systems Operated by West Central Energy)	<u>Case No. GS-2005-0246</u>

ORDER CLOSING CASE

Issue Date: August 23, 2005

Effective Date: September 2, 2005

Syllabus: This order closes the gas safety case involving West Central Energy.¹

On January 27, 2005, the Commission received a Motion to Establish Case. The Commission granted that motion on February 3.

Staff filed its Report on June 17. The report detailed Staff's opinion concerning natural gas incidents that occurred on January 5, 2005, in WCE's gas distribution system.

WCE operates natural gas distribution systems for, among other cities, Unionville and Milan. On January 5, 2005, homes in those two cities were damaged due to natural gas explosions. Staff reported the probable cause of the explosions was over-pressurization of natural gas water heaters due to service regulator malfunction. In turn, the probable cause of the service regulator malfunction was an unusually large amount of ice accumulation on those regulators. Both of the regulators were directly below roof

¹ According to the Staff's Report filed on June 17, West Central Energy became Utility Safety & Design, Inc., on May 1, 2005. For consistency's sake, Staff and the Commission will refer to the investigated party as West Central Energy or WCE.

overhangs that did not have gutters, which resulted in large amounts of water dripping directly onto the regulators.

Staff investigated the explosions, and found that WCE had not violated any of the Commission's gas safety rules. Even though Staff believed that WCE did not violate any Commission rules, Staff recommended that WCE do five things to prevent more natural gas incidents. Those five recommendations are:

- WCE shall annually monitor meter set locations that might be susceptible to ice build up on service regulating equipment during the early fall of each year when possible;
- WCE shall review its current annual liaison program with emergency responders to improve the level of communication, so gas facilities can be safely secured in the event of a potential gas incident;
- WCE shall review its public education program to determine how to better educate their customers on how to identify and report ice accumulation on natural gas meter sets;
- WCE shall submit its proposed additional customer information for Staff's review;
- WCE shall respond to Staff's recommendations, indicating whether it agrees with the recommendations.

WCE responded on July 27. That response included WCE's change of its Operating and Maintenance Plan concerning turn-on and reinstatement of distribution of service lines and patrolling service lines, and its proposed customer notice concerning ice accumulation on service regulators.

Staff filed a Memorandum to the Commission on August 15. Staff stated that it is satisfied with WCE's response toward its five recommendations, and that WCE has taken the appropriate steps to minimize the risk of ice accumulating on vital service regulators. Therefore, Staff recommends that the Commission close this case.

The Commission has reviewed the pleadings, and finds that no further investigation is needed. The Commission will close this case.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED:

1. That the Commission will close this case.
2. That this order shall become effective on September 2, 2005.
3. That this case shall be closed on September 3, 2005.

BY THE COMMISSION

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colleen M. Dale', is written over a horizontal line.

Colleen M. Dale
Secretary

(S E A L)

Davis, Chm., Murray, Gaw, Clayton and Appling, CC., concur

Pridgin, Regulatory Law Judge