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**STATE OF MISSOURI
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

At a Session of the Public Service
Commission held at its office
in Jefferson City on the 11th
day of March, 1998.

In the Matter of Laclede Gas Company)
Regarding the Incident at 1414)
Angelica Street, St. Louis, Missouri,)
on July 18, 1997.)
CASE NO. GS-98-43

ORDER CLOSING CASE

On August 8, 1997, the Commission established this case for the purpose of receiving the report of the Staff of the Commission (Staff) and the response Laclede Gas Company (Laclede) regarding an apparent gas explosion which occurred at 1414 Angelica in St. Louis, Missouri on July 18, 1997, at approximately 2:30 a.m.

On December 8, 1997, Staff filed a Gas Incident Report concerning the explosion which destroyed the residential home at 1414 Angelica and damaged adjacent homes. Staff reported there were no fatalities as a result of the explosion because the residents of 1414 Angelica were not home at the time of the explosion; however, other residents in the area received minor injuries and declined medical treatment.

Staff could not conclusively determine that any probable violations of Commission regulations contributed to the incident. Nevertheless, Staff believed that the Company serviceman did not properly complete the required documentation, according to Laclede instructions to form F-1583, when he turned on the flow of natural gas to the residence thirteen hours before the explosion.

Staff reported that the Laclede serviceman conducted a spot test, or pressure test using the meter's five cubic foot index dial; the smallest index dial on the meter. Staff believed that the probable cause of the explosion was the result of natural gas emanating from an open aluminum fuel line in the basement. Staff was unable to conclusively determine when the fuel line was left open, whether before or after the arrival of the serviceman, or if fault occurred with the natural gas meter index, or if a false verification of the pressure test was made. Nevertheless, Staff believed that a longer continuous visual inspection should have been made of the five-foot index dial.

According to Staff, the method of verifying a spot test that was used by the serviceman is common in the natural gas industry, but indications of leaks are more efficiently detected when a meter equipped with a one-half foot or smaller index dial is used. Staff reported that the serviceman would not have known all the directional paths of the customer's fuel lines that were hidden by the finished ceiling in the basement. Staff stated that if the open fuel line was not indicated by the spot test, then the serviceman would not have reason to search for the paths of the inaccessible piping or downstream location of the aluminum tubing.

Staff requested that the Company respond to the following two recommendations:

- (1) The Company review with the serviceman who conducted the turn-on, Laclede's policy and procedures pertaining to the Customer Information System Order form F-1583 (revised 3/95). Specifically, review the requirements regarding the proper documentation of Combustible Gas Indicator (CGI) readings when performing any type of job where the service enters the structure below grade.

- (2) The Company develop a turn-on order policy and/or procedure that will initiate the replacement of natural gas meters that do not have at least a 1/2 foot test hand and are installed

where a "residential" customer (low flow demand customer) is served. In situations where the replacement can not be made because immediate service is required, the Company's turn-on procedures should specifically address a spot test when the smallest test hand is greater than a 1/2 foot. Furthermore, these procedures should require an uninterrupted visual test of the meter's five 5 test hand when verifying the registering consumption of the meter and the spot test of the customer's fuel lines. Currently, the Company's procedures address a meter's 1/4 or 1/2 foot test hand, with respect to verifying the registering of the meter, but does not address a 5 foot test hand.

On February 5 Laclede filed its response to Staff's recommendations. Laclede stated it has taken the following actions with respect to the Staff's recommendations:

(1) Laclede has reviewed its turn-on policy and procedures pertaining to Customer Information System Order form F-1583 with serviceman J. Blake, who conducted the turn-on at 1414 Angelica Street on July 17, 1997. This review stressed the requirements regarding the proper documentation of combustible gas indicator (CGI) readings when any type of work is performed where the gas service line enters the structure below grade.

(2) Laclede has modified its turn-on procedure to require the immediate replacement or the initiation of an order for the replacement of a natural gas meter where a revolution of the test hand of the meter is greater than 1/2 cubic foot, and the meter serves residential, low flow demand customers. A low flow demand meter is defined as a meter having a manufacturer's flow capacity rating of 475 cubic feet per hour or less. If the immediate replacement of a meter with a test hand greater than 1/2 cubic foot per revolution is impractical, the modified procedure now requires that a manometer lock-up pressure test be performed on the customer's fuel line at the time of turn-on. This new procedure, which was implemented on January 30, 1998, provides a more thorough leak check of the customer's fuel lines than would a visual test of the meter's 5 foot test hand. The Staff has agreed that this procedure is preferable to the visual test it recommended.

On February 27 Staff filed a Memorandum in the case file which indicated that Staff reviewed the actions taken made by Laclede in response to Staff's report. Staff states that Laclede provided Staff with a copy of Laclede's revisions to its Operating and Procedures manuals. Staff states that Laclede's revised procedures adequately address Staff's

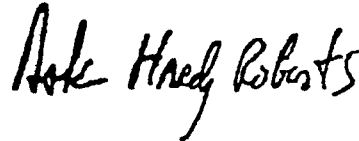
concerns contained in the report. Therefore, Staff recommends that this case be closed.

The Commission has reviewed the Staff's report, the response filed by Laclede, and the memorandum filed by Staff. The Commission determines that where meters cannot be immediately replaced, a manometer pressure test will provide a more thorough leak check of a customer's lines than would a visual check of a meter's test hand of greater than one-half cubic foot per revolution. The Commission determines that Laclede has taken appropriate actions in response to Staff's report and that Laclede has revised its Operating and Procedures manuals to adequately address Staff's concerns. Therefore, this case may be closed.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED:

1. That this case may be closed after March 25, 1998.
2. That this order shall become effective on March 24, 1998.

BY THE COMMISSION



Dale Hardy Roberts
Secretary/Chief Regulatory Law Judge

(S E A L)

Lumpe, Ch., Crumpton, Murray,
and Drainer, CC., concur.

G. George, Regulatory Law Judge

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COMMISSION COUNSEL
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION