

BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI

FILED²
JUN 05 2006

Missouri Public
Service Commission

USW Local 11-6

Complainant,

v.

Laclede Gas Company,

Respondent.

)
)
) Case No. GC-2006-0060
)
)
)

TESTIMONY OF ROBERT STEVEN ARNOLD

I, Robert Steven Arnold, declare and state:

Q. By whom are you currently employed?

A. Pattonville Fire District.

Q. In what capacity?

A. Fire Chief of the Pattonville Bridgeton Terrace Fire Protection District.

Q. How long have you been a firefighter?

A. 30 years.

Q. Do you hold any other position relating to public safety?

A. Yes, I am a Commissioner on the Missouri Emergency Response Commission representing the Fire Service in the State of Missouri.

Q. Were you subpoenaed to testify?

A. No.

Q. Then why are you providing testimony in this matter?

A. To address my serious safety concerns for the public and for firefighters who respond to potential natural gas and carbon monoxide emergencies in the communities served by the Laclede Gas Company ("Laclede") arising from Laclede's intention to stop the following activities: 1) performing gas-safe inspections known as "turn off turn ons" when changing

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service, which includes inspecting the meter, every gas appliance in the residence for leaking gas lines & valves, and making sure all gas appliance flues are in proper working order; 2) performing annual meter reads on remotely-read meters, and 3) performing in-house residential appliance inspections following the changing of gas meters.

Q. Will you be present at the hearing to supplement your written testimony?

A. No. Regretfully, I have a pre-existing firefighting-related engagement. I appreciate the opportunity to present my concerns in this way. If you have any questions, please feel free to call (314-739-3118) or email me at sarnold@pattonvillefd.com.

Q. Why do Laclede's intentions concern you?

A. As a Fire Service professional, I know that emergencies and evacuations from explosions, fires, and natural gas leaks occur almost everyday in this country in all types of facilities from commercial to the residential setting.

Q. Can you provide an example of how you believe Laclede's actions will impact the public and Fire Service professionals?

A. Yes. Imagine this scenario: You lease or purchase a residence that was previously lived in. Either no house sale inspection was performed (because you are leasing) or the prior owner moved out after the house sale inspection, as commonly occurs. In either event, no one from the gas company enters your home to do a safety inspection on the gas meter, gas appliances, or to check the flue(s) for proper operation.

An unknown problem occurs with the gas-fired hot water heater. The hot water heater's burner will not shut off and the safety relief valve fails. When this happens, the water in the tank starts storing a lot of energy and the internal tank pressure begins to build.

As the temperature increases the tank itself starts to tear. At failure, all of the water expands 1,700 times its volume in an instant. A pressure pulse blows out walls and moves anything in its path including you or members of your family. Approximately 50 gallons of water instantly flashes into steam which is equivalent to setting off several sticks of dynamite.

Natural gas appliances are beneficial as long as it is a controlled process. Control means that combustion takes place where we want it, when we want it, and at the rate we want it. The complicated-looking series of valves, wires, and switches that comprise the gas-fired appliances takes care of this as long as the appliances are properly maintained and annually inspected by professionals.

When the Laclede stops performing the aforementioned inspection procedures, a very important public safety step is being removed and leaving the inspection responsibility solely to the residential homeowner. Annual inspections of gas appliances may or may not occur based on the homeowner's financial situation or simply remembering to have the inspections done by a private heating & cooling company.

Q. Do you have any other concerns about public safety arising from Laclede's intended changes in procedures?

A. Yes. It is estimated that 1500 people die annually from accidental Carbon Monoxide exposure and an additional 10,000 seek medical attention. It is a strong possibility that these numbers could increase from gas fired appliance flues not operating properly. This most important part of the gas appliance system could be overlooked for quite some time if the inspections are stopped.

Q. You mentioned earlier that you were concerned about Laclede's intentions from the perspective of firefighter safety too. Would you please explain your concern?

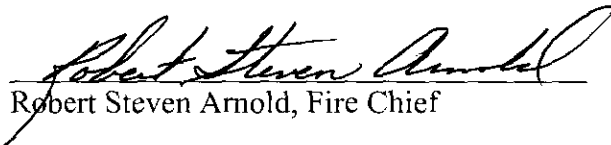
A. I saved my most important concern for last. Over 100 firefighters die annually in this country from responding to all types of emergencies. Over 80 of those firefighter deaths occur while fighting residential fires. My heartfelt concern is that we could possibly see an increase in residential fires in our area due to potential faulty gas fired appliances or faulty gas meters. We are working diligently to bring our line of duty deaths down and the possibility of an increase in residential fires will increase our risk not lessen it.

Q. Is there anything else you want to say to the Public Service Commission?

A. If the professionals at the Laclede Gas Company are taken out of the aforementioned inspection processes, risk to the public & firefighters will certainly increase; how much, only time will tell. On behalf of the firefighters & myself at the Pattonville Fire Protection District, I urge the Missouri Public Service Commission to consider the possible long-term public safety problems by allowing the aforementioned inspections to cease.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States that the foregoing is true and correct and that I have personal knowledge of the facts contained herein and, if called upon to testify, I could and would competently testify thereto.

Executed on the 8th day of May, 2006.


Robert Steven Arnold, Fire Chief