

Log P-8 Not 574 Re P-71-5
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: April 27, 1971

Adopted by the NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
at its office in Washington, D. C.
on the 7th day of April, 1971.
(second revision)

FORWARDED TO:)
Honorable John A. Volpe)
Secretary of Transportation)
Washington, D. C. 20590)

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION P-71-5

Two recent gas explosions dramatize the need for regulations to prevent the occurrence of catastrophic accidents which result from the unauthorized operation of valves by persons other than utility company employees.

In the first, 12 people were killed and more than 60 injured when a restaurant owner in New York City, on December 11, 1970, allegedly opened a shutoff valve located outside in the street, allowing gas to flow through unconnected house piping into the building where the gas exploded. In the second case, similar circumstances existed. On January 4, 1970, in Miami Beach, Florida, the new owner of a restaurant reportedly opened the valve at the gas meter behind the building which supplied his premises. The meter valve had been turned off by the gas utility at the request of the old owner. When the gas valve for the restaurant was turned on, the valves of the two other meters located behind the building were also opened. The gas lines leading from one of the other meters had been disconnected previously, but were not capped. When the valve for this meter was opened, it allowed gas to flow into the building. An explosion resulted which killed one person and injured 34 others.

The information concerning the New York accident was supplied by the New York City Fire Department, while the facts on the Miami Beach case were provided by the Office of Pipeline Safety. Both of these cases point up the need for Federal regulations to prohibit the existence of risks that can result in this type of accident.

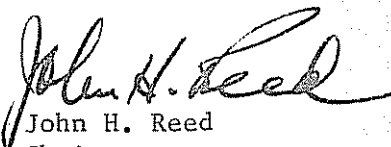
Devices and procedures are in use by a number of utilities to reduce such risks.

In view of the foregoing, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that:

The Department of Transportation issue regulations which will tend to prevent the occurrence of catastrophic accidents which result from the unauthorized operation of valves by persons other than utility company employees.

This recommendation will be released to the public on the issue date shown above. No public dissemination of the contents of this document should be made prior to that date.

Reed, Chairman; Laurel, McAdams, Thayer, and Burgess, Members, concurred in the above recommendation.

By: 
John H. Reed
Chairman