

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: April 25, 1978

Forwarded to:

Honorable Michael A. Bilandic
Mayor
Chicago, Illinois 60601

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

P-78-17

At 1:35 p.m. on October 14, 1977, an explosion and fire destroyed a two-family house at 4930 W. Cortez Street in Chicago, Illinois. One person was killed, three persons were injured, and two adjacent houses were damaged.

Natural gas had entered the building through a broken service head adapter which was used to connect inserted plastic service lines to the riser and meter set on the inside of the building. The adapter was broken when a contractor, employed by the city to remove street curbs, pulled the 1 1/4-inch, plastic-encased service line operating at 1/4 psig.

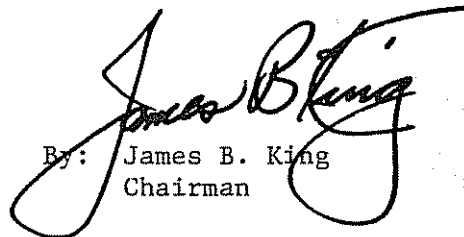
Under the Municipal Code of Chicago, all persons, contracting firms, developers, etc., are required to obtain permits from the Bureau of Streets for all work that involves any portion of the public way. The permittee is then required to notify all affected utilities, i.e., water, sewer, telephone, and gas, of any planned excavations. This notification can be made by telephoning the Chicago Utility Alert Network (Digger), the one-call system for the city of Chicago.

The contractor in this case was working under a city contract which included the permit. Even though the permit was not issued separately, the contractor was still responsible for notifying the utilities of planned excavations. The city engineer who was in charge of this project reported on the construction progress daily to his office, but he did not ascertain whether the contractor was notifying the utilities of the location of excavations by telephoning the one-call system. Neither the contractor nor the one-call system notified the Peoples Gas Light and Coke Company of the proposed excavation so it could mark its service lines for this project. There also appears to have been a lack of communication between the city and its contractor.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the city of Chicago:

Instruct its employees who monitor work of contractors performing construction for the city, to ascertain that the contractor has notified utilities of planned construction through use of the one-call notification system. (Class I, Urgent Action) (P-78-17)

KING, Chairman, McADAMS, HOGUE, and DRIVER, Members, concurred in the above recommendation.


By: James B. King
Chairman