

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: July 6, 1978

Forwarded to:

Honorable Maynard Jackson
Mayor
City of Atlanta, Georgia
68 Mitchell S.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

P-78-20

At 1 p.m., e.s.t., on December 1, 1977, a 12-inch, cast-iron, high-pressure gas main owned by the Atlanta Gas Light Company (AGL) was ruptured by an 8-inch steel I-beam pile, which was driven through the pipe at the construction site of a new central library in downtown Atlanta, Georgia. 1/

Within minutes, natural gas at 10-psig pressure migrated through the ground, entered sewer lines and electric conduit systems, and spread into nearby buildings. The gas did not ignite, but thousands of people were evacuated from nearby office buildings. A valve was closed at 2:45 p.m. to shut off the flow of gas to the ruptured main, and the area was declared safe at 4 p.m.


On September 29, 1977, a preconstruction meeting was held as prescribed by the construction contract for the library. Local utilities were not invited to this meeting; however, AGL could have been briefed at that time on the scope of the project, and could have determined which of their lines were involved. The lines could then have been marked at the site. Also at this meeting, AGL and the contractor could have designated a person from each company to serve as points-of-contact for problems that might occur in the field.

1/ For more detailed information read "Pipeline Accident Report -- Atlanta Gas Light Company, High-Pressure Gas Main Rupture, Atlanta, Georgia, December 1, 1977" (NTSB-PAR-78-3)

As a result of its investigation of this accident, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the city of Atlanta, Georgia:

Request that a representative of each operator of an underground facility attend all preconstruction meetings for excavation projects contracted by the city. (Class II, Priority Action)(P-78-20)

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


By James B. King
Chairman