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NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

FOR RELEASE: 6:30 A.M., E.S.T., NOVEMBER 14, 1975

(202) 426-8787

ISSUED: November 14, 1975

Forwarded to:

Mr. Walter E. Rogers
President
Interstate Natural Gas Association
of America
1660 L Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20036

Mr. Frank N. Ikard
President
American Petroleum Institute
1801 K Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20005

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

P-75-14

At 12:30 a.m., CDT, on October 13, 1975, the personnel on duty at the El Paso Natural Gas Company's (El Paso) gas processing plant at Goldsmith, Texas, heard gas leaking from a pipe. Five employees began a search for the origin of the leak. At 12:45 a.m., a 12-inch pipe ruptured, and gas roared at 550-psig pressure through the now-open end of the 12-inch pipe and ignited violently seconds later. Three of the five employees were killed, and two were burned and hospitalized.

The blazing gas caused the inlet scrubber piping to fail, so that flaming liquid hydrocarbons were blown over the top of one of the plant's compressor buildings and onto a cooling tower.

The blast shattered windows in nearby houses and flames could be seen for 20 miles. Firefighters from Andrews, Kermit, Monahans, and other towns battled the blaze until it was under control at 3 a.m. Smaller fires fed by pockets of natural gas were allowed to burn out. Some persons in the town of Goldsmith were evacuated by the local fire department as a precaution.

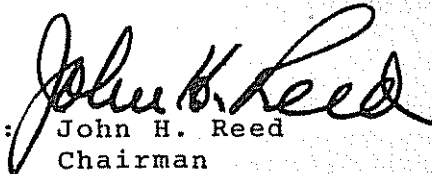
The plant was shut down because of damaged piping, valves, and other equipment.

Subsequent investigation by the Safety Board revealed extensive internal corrosion in the stub end of a 12-inch line used to transport natural gas from El Paso's compressors to a natural gasoline plant one-half mile away. Hydrocarbon liquids, hydrogen sulfide gas, carbon dioxide gas, and some water had collected in this dead-end pipe, which extended about 10 feet.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Interstate Natural Gas Association of America and the American Petroleum Institute:

Advise their member companies who operate similar gas processing plants to locate any areas of potential liquid accumulation and internal corrosion within their facilities and to take necessary remedial action to prevent similar accidents from occurring. (Class I, Urgent followup).

REED, Chairman, McADAMS, BURGESS, and HALEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendation. THAYER, Member, was absent, not voting.


By: John H. Reed
Chairman

cc: Honorable William T. Coleman, Jr.
Secretary of Transportation

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