

WELLESLEY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

MICHAEL D'ORTENZIO JR., CHAIR
MATT KELLEY, VICE CHAIR
MELISSA MARTIN, SECRETARY



LINDA CHOW, MEMBER
SHARON GRAY, MEMBER

40 Kingsbury Street • Wellesley • Massachusetts • 02481

May 8, 2018

Susan Griffin
Principal Program Manager, Community & Customer Management Team
National Grid
Susan.Griffin@nationalgrid.com

Re: Gas Leaks In and Around School Zones in the Town of Wellesley

Dear Susan:

We are writing to request information about the status of gas leaks in and around school zones in Wellesley. Recently, the elected Wellesley Natural Resources Commission (NRC) and the non-profit group Wellesley Green Schools contacted us regarding gas leaks data from an independent study commissioned by the Wellesley NRC in 2017, by Gas Safety Inc. While the School Committee was not involved in the independent study or the data collection process, the study showed a number of gas leaks in or near school zones that do not appear in the publicly available data on gas leaks reported by National Grid. At the request of the NRC and Wellesley Green Schools, we want to 1) make you aware of these data and 2) request information about National Grid's plan to remediate these leaks.

Please see the attached letter from the Wellesley NRC and Wellesley Green Schools we received for a map of the data and list of potential leak locations in and around school zones. If you have questions regarding the independent study, please contact Brandon Schmitt, NRC Director at bschmitt@wellesleyma.gov or (781) 431-1019, ext. 2294.

We request that you report back to confirm that you are aware of these leaks in and around Wellesley schools zones, and let us know whether they have been successfully repaired or what the schedule is for repairing them.

Sincerely,
Wellesley School Committee


Michael D'Ortenzio Jr.
Chair


Matt Kelley
Vice Chair


Melissa Martin
Secretary


Sharon Gray


Linda Chow

May 8, 2018

Michael D'Ortenzio
Chair, Wellesley School Committee

Dear Michael,

We are writing to raise an important concern about gas leaks near our schools.

Gas leaks are a concern because they

- Can cause explosions¹
- Are potentially harmful to human health
- Kill trees by suffocating the roots
- Release methane, an extraordinarily potent greenhouse gas

The gas company is required by law to prioritize for repair any gas leak that presents an explosion risk, or that is on or within 50 feet of a school zone (MA General Laws, Part I, Title XXII, Chapter 164, Section 144). As of December 2017, National Grid has identified 197 active gas leaks near homes, schools, and businesses in Wellesley. In 2017, the NRC commissioned an independent survey to better understand the extent of the town's gas leak problem. The survey data was collected from May 11 to June 15, 2017, and shows even more extensive leaks than those reported by National Grid (see map link "Gas Leaks reported by National Grid as of 2017 and leak data from 2017 independent study" on NRC page, at www.wellesleyma.gov, under "Current Projects" and "Gas Leaks").

We would particularly like to draw your attention to leaks that are located within 100 feet of all Wellesley "school zones" ("a public or private accredited preschool, accredited Head Start facility, elementary, vocational or secondary school" as defined by the MA General Laws, Part I, Title XXII, Chapter 164, Section 144 d). We are highlighting leaks within *100 feet* of school zones because the exact location of a gas leak is difficult to pinpoint, and therefore, we would like leaks in close proximity to any school zone to be investigated and prioritized for repair by the gas company -- although the gas company is only required to prioritize leaks within *50 feet* of a school zone.

¹ Note, National Grid is required to evaluate all gas leaks within 2 hours of the leak being reported. If the leak presents an explosion risk, regulations require the risk be mitigated immediately.

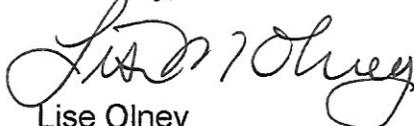
We have attached a list of general locations for leaks within 100 feet of school zones (including public and private schools, and preschools) in Wellesley, and we have highlighted the school zones and most current leak data on the map posted on the NRC web page (see map link "Gas Leaks reported by National Grid as of 2017 and leak data from 2017 independent study" on NRC page, at www.wellesleyma.gov, under "Current Projects" and "Gas Leaks").

We are asking the School Committee to contact the gas company on behalf of all Wellesley schools and preschools to notify them of this subset of leaks in Wellesley. We hope that a request from our School Committee will expedite the repair process. Dave Hickey, Town Engineer, has kindly provided this contact for National Grid: Susan Griffin, Principal Program Manager with the Community & Customer Management team Susan.Griffin@nationalgrid.com.

Working with the Wellesley Green Schools organization, we also plan to continue to build awareness about the town's gas leaks among parents and other Wellesley residents, and may conduct additional outreach to private schools and preschools as well.

Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Lise Olney
Gas Leaks Sub Committee
Wellesley Natural Resources Commission
wellesleyma.gov/NRC



Amy Braz
Gas Leaks Sub Committee
Wellesley Green Schools
WellesleyGreenSchools.com

Attachments: "Gas Leaks Fact Sheet" (NRC), "Gas Leaks Kill Trees" (Gas Leaks Allies), School Gas Leaks Inventory (NRC)

Fact Sheet on Gas Leaks in Wellesley

Wellesley Natural Resources Commission

Natural gas is distributed to our homes and other buildings through pipes under the street. Some of these pipes are more than 100 years old and have developed leaks. There are about 16,000 known gas leaks in Massachusetts — at least 200 are in Wellesley.

Why do we care about gas leaks?

- **Gas leaks contribute to global warming.**
 - Natural gas consists primarily of methane, known to be one of the most destructive chemicals implicated in global warming.
 - Methane makes up about 10% of the greenhouse gas emissions in our state.
 - Methane leaks undermine our efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through efficiency and conservation.
- **Gas leaks are dangerous.** Under certain conditions, gas leaks can result in explosions, although gas companies work hard to identify and urgently repair any potentially explosive leak.
- **Gas leaks are harmful to human health.** We breathe in the methane and chemical components of the leaking gas, resulting in asthma and other respiratory illnesses.
- **Gas leaks cost us money.** As ratepayers, we are all paying for lost gas every month on our bills.
- **Gas leaks kill our trees and other plants.** Methane in the soil takes the place of oxygen that trees and plants need, essentially suffocating them.

In March 2017, the NRC hosted a gas leaks summit and conducted an independent gas leaks survey to better identify the locations of the town's gas leaks. Find out where gas leaks are located in Wellesley by visiting:

<http://www.wellesleyma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/9165>

What can we do about gas leaks?

State law requires that gas companies fix leaks that are potentially explosive (M.G.Lch164§144). Any gas leak on or within 50 feet of a school zone is also required by law to be prioritized for repair. Other leaks must be investigated but the gas company is not required to repair them immediately. The Department of Public Utilities is developing new regulations for the repair of leaks that are considered environmentally significant.

Meanwhile, as citizens, we can raise awareness about the gas leaks problem and make sure that the gas companies and our legislators know that we care about this issue and want to see it addressed.

- Join the **Natural Resource Commission** email list to stay informed: nrc@wellesleyma.gov
- Support efforts to transition our energy supply away from natural gas to clean and renewable sources.
- Consider switching your home to electric heat with the installation of an electric heat pump.
- When purchasing a new stove or clothes dryer, consider an electric appliance rather than one powered by gas.

If you smell gas in Wellesley, call National Grid at 800-233-5325.

Wellesley Natural Resources Commission
Visit us at wellesleyma.gov/NRC

Facebook: @WellesleyNaturalResourcesCommission

Gas Leaks Kill Trees

Miles of pipes under our streets are leaking methane gas that is killing our street trees as well as polluting our air and contaminating the soil. Gas suffocates trees by depriving the roots of the oxygen they need to survive.

Gas leaks have killed street trees throughout Massachusetts.

Tree deaths from gas leaks are documented in Acton, Boston, Brookline, Concord, Cambridge, Newton, Salem, Somerville, Springfield, Wellesley, Worcester, and many other cities and towns.

Gas leaks that kill street trees cost taxpayers millions of dollars.

Street trees are valuable property owned by cities and towns. Dead or dying trees must be cut down and replaced, costing approximately \$1,000 for each new tree. It takes decades for new trees to mature and replicate the canopy of legacy trees planted in the 19th century.

Street trees benefit our environment.

Trees create shade, clean the air, reduce storm water runoff, absorb carbon emissions, and keep our neighborhoods cool in summer.

Street trees enhance the quality of urban life.

Trees keep us healthy. They reduce asthma, improve physical and mental well-being, affect obesity, and reduce stress by buffering the noise of city life. They provide habitat for urban wildlife. They increase property values, creating shady streets that are more desirable.

Gas companies have known for decades that their leaky pipes are killing trees.

Fixing leaks that kill trees is not a priority for gas companies. There are no mandates for repair and no serious financial consequences.



The Department of Public Utilities does not hold gas companies accountable for letting trees die due to gas leaks.

The DPU does not consider requiring utilities to protect trees to be part of its mission to serve the public.

We are paying for the leaking gas that is killing our street trees.

In the greater Boston area, the value of leaking gas is estimated to be \$90 million a year. As gas customers, we are paying for that lost gas in our monthly bills. We're also paying to replace the trees that are being killed by gas from unrepaired leaks.

TAKE ACTION: To find gas leaks near trees in your town, go to squeakyleak.org. Then urge your elected representatives to prioritize fixing gas leaks that kill trees.

The Gas Leaks Allies is a Massachusetts coalition working to cut methane emissions from gas leaks. To learn more, visit FixBigGasLeaks.org.

NRC Gas Leak Survey Results

Closest addresses to observed or reported leaks within 100' of Schools or Daycares

School

BATES/UPHAM	116 Elmwood/35 Tanglewood Rd.
Gas Leaks detected at	19 Dukes Road* 5 Pinevale Rd. * 6 Pinevale Rd. * 42 Elmwood Rd. * 26 Elmwood Rd. * 27 Elmwood Rd.* 42 Overbrook Rd. 104 Elmwood Rd. 26 Ingersol Rd.*
DANA HALL	45 Dana Rd
Gas Leaks detected at	31 Hampden ST 28 Hampden ST 10 Eliot ST 16 Eliot ST 103 Grove ST 109 Grove ST 117 Grove ST 121 Grove ST 125 Grove ST 131 Grove ST 137 Grove ST
TENACRE	70 Benvenue ST
Gas Leaks detected at	59 Benvenue 73 Benvenue 77 benvenue 85 Benvenue 3 Cartwright Rd 102 Benvenue 6 Cartwright
FISKE	45 Hastings ST
Gas Leaks detected at	50 Hastings ST 1 Madison Road 2 Madison Road 36 Hastings ST 204 Worcester ST* 212 Worcester ST* 308 Washington ST* 39 Abbott St* 32 Willow ST*

HARDY	293 Weston Rd.
Gas Leaks detected at	303 Weston Rd. 298 Weston Rd. 294 Weston Rd. 292 Weston Rd. 1 Lafayette Circle 293 Weston Rd. 838 Worcester ST* 842 Worcester ST* 846 Worcester ST* 848 Worcester ST* 851 Worcester ST* 847 Worcester ST* 843 Worcester ST*
HIGH SCHOOL	50 Rice ST
Gas Leaks detected at	81 Seaver ST 83 Seaver ST 80 Seaver ST 60 Seaver ST 58 Seaver ST 56 Seaver ST 3 Peck Ave 2 Peck Ave 40 Seaver ST 50 Rice ST
HUNNEWELL	28 Cameron ST
Gas Leaks detected at	14 Wellesley Ave.* 7 Norfolk Terrace* 24 Wildon RD* 20 Wildon Rd*
SCHOFIELD	27 Cedar ST
Gas Leaks detected at	36 Cedar ST 34 Cedar ST 32 Cedar ST 30 Cedar ST 28 Cedar ST 26 Cedar ST 24 Cedar ST 28 Croton ST* 11-13 Cedar ST 22 Cedar ST 138 Walnut ST
SPRAGUE/MIDDLE	401 School ST
Gas Leaks detected at	410 School ST 411 School ST

* Indicates Daycare location