



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

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October 3, 2019

President Mark Kempic
Bay State Gas Company,
d/b/a Columbia Gas of Massachusetts
4 Technology Drive, Suite 250
Westborough, MA 01581

RE: New Protocol Regarding Columbia Gas's Work

Dear President Kempic,

In recent weeks, the Department of Public Utilities (“Department”) has become aware of several troubling issues involving the operations of Columbia Gas of Massachusetts (“Columbia Gas”). More specifically, on September 11, 2019, you reported issues relating to service lines that were abandoned during the restoration work in Merrimack Valley following last year’s gas line event. Additionally, while investigating a Grade 1 gas leak in Lawrence on September 27, 2019, the Department discovered that, during the restoration efforts, Columbia Gas failed to follow required procedures for the abandonment of gate boxes. If the company had followed those procedures, the gate boxes would have been removed or made inaccessible, preventing the subsequent Grade 1 gas leak, service shutoffs, and forced evacuations.

The Department’s concerns are significant, and have led to the opening of multiple new investigations into Columbia Gas. As a result, and to ensure commitment to a safe distribution system, the Department hereby requires that, unless the Department explicitly approves specific requests to complete other work, Columbia Gas shall perform only emergency work on its gas distribution system throughout its service territories (*i.e.*,

Lawrence, Springfield, Brockton). As a general matter, the Department expects to approve work involving customer service connections and conversions of heating supply for new and existing customers. The Department also expects that Columbia Gas will promptly submit any requests to approve work.

The restrictions set forth in this letter do not apply to Columbia Gas's ongoing work to address the previously identified issues with abandoned services and gate boxes in Merrimack Valley, including the repairs of Grade 1, 2, or 3 gas leaks in that area. Additionally, Columbia Gas must provide each municipality in its service territories and the Department with daily notice of all planned work. These directives will remain in place until modified by the Department.

Sincerely,

/s/ Matthew H. Nelson

Matthew H. Nelson
Chairman