Updated Statement from Metropolitan Utilities District (M.U.D.)

January 21, 2016

We want to start by saying that our thoughts are with the Old Market residents, businesses and neighbors as they recover from the 11th and Howard Street building fire.

We appreciate the public and the media's patience in waiting for additional information while the incident investigation is conducted. Although the investigation is still not completed, based upon today's news release from the Omaha Fire Department (OFD) and M.U.D.'s investigators' observations at the site, Thursday, January 21, 2016, the following is some additional information in response to several questions that have been raised since the incident.

Were the utilities properly located/marked?

The M.U.D. investigators were allowed to observe the surface area prior to the excavation work that was done on the site Thursday, January 21, 2016. In M.U.D.'s opinion, there is evidence of accurate yellow location marks on the curb and sidewalk area in front of the building where the natural gas service line entered M's Pub. The marks did show some "wear and tear" which is to be expected due to vehicular and pedestrian traffic, the winter weather conditions and all of the activity in that area on January 9 in response to the incident.

In addition, in M.U.D.'s opinion, there was no evidence of a prior excavation around the location marks to determine the depth of the service line. As noted in the OFD news release, it appears that the gas service line was hit by crews working to horizontally bore lines under the sidewalk in front of the building.

What is the locate process?

M.U.D. is a member of Nebraska 811, which serves as one point of communication between anyone excavating and utility companies with underground facilities. M.U.D. received and completed several locate requests from the Nebraska 811 Call Center for the location on natural gas and water utilities in the area of South 11th and Howard St. On large projects like this one, M.U.D.'s locators are in contact with the contractors in the field as needed throughout the project.

Locations are either sprayed with paint or marked with flags - yellow for gas and blue for water - to mark the area where natural gas pipes/services or water pipe/services are located underground.

The markings confirm the location of these pipes and service lines. The markings do not verify the depth of these underground utilities. That responsibility lies with the contractor requesting the locate.

What is the age of the infrastructure (pipe) that serves the building at 11th and Howard?

M.U.D.'s records indicate the gas service line supplying M's Pub was a 10-psi, 2-inch (diameter), plastic line installed in 2009. That service line connects to a 10-psi, 2-inch, plastic gas main running north/south along the east side of 11th Street that was installed in 1969. In M.U.D.'s opinion, the age of the natural gas infrastructure was not a factor in the incident.

Was there a history of natural gas main leaks in the area?

The District's records indicate that there have been no gas main leaks in the area bounded by 10th Street to 13th Streets, Harney to Jackson Streets in the last 10 years.

At that location, were there inoperable or broken gas valves?

Our investigation has concluded that there were no inoperable or broken valves. What M.U.D. believes may have caused this misperception is that in order to open the lids over a number of valves, due to the winter conditions, etc., several of the lids had to be pried to break off ice that had built up surrounding the lid itself.

When did M.U.D. first get officially notified of the incident?

M.U.D.'s Dispatch Office received a "possible explosion and working fire" call from 911 at 2:52 p.m. The Dispatch Office did not receive any "smell gas" calls prior to receiving the 911 call.

How long did it take for M.U.D. to respond to the scene?

The first Field Service Technician arrived on the scene within 24 minutes of the 911 call. M.U.D.'s Gas Leak Response Procedure states that M.U.D. will respond in less than one hour and the goal is to respond in less than 30 minutes. In 2015, M.U.D.'s average gas leak response time was 26.4 minutes.

What was the process to shut off gas to the building?

It did take some time to locate and stop the flow of natural gas that was feeding a contained area of flames in the front of M's Pub towards the north end of the building.

Upon arrival, the first Field Service Technician was asked by a Fire Captain to meet with the Fire Incident Commander on site. Following that meeting, the Technician began to assess the scene visually. A valve lid was located near the entrance to M's Pub which the Technician believed to be the valve to the gas service line supplying M's Pub. The lid to that valve was frozen and had

to be pried open. Once opened, the Technician turned that valve off but the contained flame area mentioned previously did not subside.

Unfortunately, that lid/valve set was to an old gas service line to M's Pub that was directionally in line with where the current service line runs. In addition, at this time, the actual lid/valve to the current gas service line was located under a parked car on the east side of 11th Street and not visible to the Technician.

Since shutting off what was believed at the time to be the current gas service line to M's Pub, the Technician then saw that the private directional boring contractor had exposed the gas main that was located in the alley to the north of M's Pub. In addition, numerous gas meters were located in that alley. By this time, additional Service Technicians had arrived and they began to shut down the gas meters in the alley.

The initial Technician called a representative of our Gas Distribution Division to coordinate efforts to shut down the gas main in the alley without creating any adverse issues. Once they determined that the gas main could be safely shut down, efforts focused on initiating that process by shutting off two valves, one on the east end of the alley, and the other on the west end. Again, it was determined those efforts in the alley did not extinguish the contained flame area mentioned previously.

In the interim, the car that had been parked over the lid/valve that was connected to the current service line had been moved and the lid/valve was now exposed. Efforts to shut that valve were initiated and completed and the contained flame area was extinguished.

M.U.D.'s efforts are focused on shutting down the natural gas flowing at an active fire as quickly as possible. A review of the actions taken in the field indicates that the personnel were following a methodical process to shut down any and all possible sources of natural gas into the M's Pub building. In this incident the gas flow was shut down within 72 minutes of our arrival on the scene. There is no "standard" timeframe to shut down natural gas in these situations. Each incident is dependent on the circumstances found at the scene.

It should also be noted that the Fire Department did request that all possible natural gas sources into the M's Pub building and the buildings to the west be shut off. As a result, the efforts outlined above were necessary.

What was done to make sure the adjacent gas system was safe?

M.U.D. Technicians checked the atmosphere in the adjoining buildings, underground vaults and sewers. They completed a gas leak survey of the surrounding area and detected no leaks. In addition, technicians drove a gas leak survey truck to check sewers and vaults about a block and a half around the affected area, and no leaks were detected.

What should someone do if they smell natural gas?

Natural gas, in its natural/original state, has no odor and is invisible. For your safety, we add a harmless chemical called mercaptan so you can detect a gas leak. Most people describe the smell as rotten eggs or a skunky odor. If you smell gas:

- Do not use matches, candles, lighters, flashlights, motors or appliances. Do not use the light switch, telephone or cell phone.
- Get everyone out of the building/area.
- Call 911 or M.U.D.'s emergency line at 402.554.7777. We check gas leaks at no charge, 24/7.
- To prevent carbon monoxide, have your appliances inspected every year by a qualified heating contractor. If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, call 911 immediately.
- Digging in your yard? Call 811 at least two business days in advance to have utilities located.

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