



News Release

Contact: Cindy Harger, Teton County Public Information Specialist

Phone: 307-732-5786 (office), (307) 264-9102 (mobile)

Email address: charger@tetonwyo.org

Downtown Jackson Gas Leak Resolved

Jackson, Wyo. – Oct. 12, 2016 – Emergency crews from Jackson Hole Fire/EMS and Lower Valley Energy acted quickly this morning to remedy a leaking natural gas line and to abate any hazard to schools and residences in the North Jean Street area of Jackson.

The gas leak began at 7:40 a.m. after a contractor dug into a 4-inch line in front of a house under construction on North Jean Street. Upon reports to emergency dispatchers, Fire/EMS and Town of Jackson Police Department crews immediately began evacuating the one-block area around the leak. Within five minutes of the emergency responders' arrival, Lower Valley crews were on the scene clamping the leak, said Incident Commander Capt. Tyler Dunn of Jackson Hole Fire/EMS.

Officials estimated that 20 to 30 people were impacted by the evacuation of a one-block area bounded by North Jean Street, Teton Avenue, Moran Street, and East Deloney Avenue. Emergency officials knocked on doors to alert residents. They found that many residents were not home or had already self-evacuated due to the strong smell of natural gas and the sound of the leak, which sounded like "a jet taking off," Dunn said.

Once the leak was clamped and the gas began to dissipate, residents were able to return to their homes by approximately 8:30 a.m.

Jackson Elementary School on North Willow Street was temporarily closed due to the smell of gas when the leak was occurring, according to Teton County School District Information Coordinator Charlotte Reynolds. However, students and teachers were able to attend classes under normal operations at 8:30 a.m.

"Thanks to the response we had from Lower Valley, the hazard was mitigated very, very rapidly," Dunn said. "I saw a Lower Valley guy once wearing a t-shirt saying, 'Even firefighters need a hero,' and it was true. We were maintaining our perimeter of a minimum of 100 meters, and they were in the hole within inches of the leak."

Brian Tanabe, Lower Valley Energy communications and marketing manager, said there might be a lingering smell in town throughout the morning until the natural gas -- and the harmless agent in the gas that causes the smell, mercaptan -- can completely dissipate, but there is no danger.

"People can go about their business normally," said Jackson Hole Fire/EMS Fire Marshal Kathy Clay.

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