

Public service commission to investigate fatal explosion

News

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Posted on : 2013/2/20 17:30:00

The Chairman of the Missouri Public Service Commission today expressed sympathy and concern for victims harmed in the natural gas explosion that occurred in Kansas City's Country Club Plaza at approximately 6 p.m. Tuesday.

“Our hearts and our prayers go out to the victims and their families,” PSC Chairman Kevin Gunn said during a public session of the Commission today. “Public safety is always the paramount concern of the Public Service Commission.”

Gunn said staff from the PSC’s Pipeline Safety Section was dispatched to Kansas City upon receiving reports of the explosion. Staff will be conducting a detailed investigation of the explosion once local fire and emergency officials complete the search and rescue phase of the emergency response.

Under Missouri law, the Public Service Commission is responsible for intrastate natural gas pipeline safety — not just for investor-owned utilities, but for all intrastate natural gas pipelines. Any incident involving an intrastate natural gas pipeline is investigated by the PSC Staff and a full report is provided to the Commission.

Gunn cautioned against speculation pending completion of the investigation, but early indications suggest it was not a system failure.

“Very preliminary reports indicate this leak may have been caused by a strike on a line, rather than a spontaneous infrastructure failure,” Gunn said. “However, we cannot know for certain until our staff completes what will be a very detailed inspection.”

Those inspections can require months, or more, to complete before a full report is provided to the Commission. Meanwhile, Gunn empathized with the families and victims.

We are deeply saddened by the apparent loss of life and for the injuries sustained by so many,” Gunn said. “Our thoughts and our prayers are with you and your families”.