

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

EPA Investigating Gas Pipeline Liquids

PCB Sampling Project

Park Ridge, Illinois

July 2007

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is investigating liquids found in several residential gas pipe lines, furnaces and heaters in Park Ridge that were reported by Nicor Gas. Earlier this year liquid condensation containing hazardous compounds was found in the natural gas systems of Park Ridge homes. Nicor informed EPA of the situation on June 13 and outlined plans to sample other homes and buildings in the area.

Nicor is carrying out an expanded investigation of additional Park Ridge buildings and homes. If a structure is found to have any liquid in the gas lines, meters or appliances, EPA may do follow-up testing – with the permission of owners and residents – to ensure Nicor's cleanup effort was thorough.

This additional EPA testing may include air sampling, surface wipe samples (where a surface is swabbed for liquid residue), visual inspections and soil sampling near gas meters outside structures. Nicor will also be replacing gas meters at homes tested in its expanded investigation.

Nicor is doing this work because in February and again in May the company found natural gas meters and appliances contaminated with condensation containing PCBs at four Park Ridge residences. The company found liquid condensation in the gas system that included methane, propane, butane and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in the homes. At no cost to the homeowners, Nicor replaced the affected meters, gas pipes and furnaces, boilers and water heaters and tested inside the homes to ensure there was no further contamination.

The natural gas appliances that can be affected by the liquids include gas furnaces, boilers and water heaters. Nicor and its natural gas suppliers have installed special equipment on their systems to remove as much of the liquid as possible. In the instances where the condensation was found inside home pipes, furnaces, boilers and water heaters, Nicor took steps to address each case individually.

The results of all testing will be provided to the owners and residents of the properties checked. If further action is needed, EPA will notify the affected people. Some of these liquids Nicor found could cause health problems if residents were continually exposed to them. So far EPA has found nothing to indicate the liquids have caused any harm to people.

How to identify a potential problem

The signs of problems associated with PCBs are the same as for other gas line problems. They include:

- low gas flow in your gas-operated equipment, such as water heaters
- the smell of gas in or near your house
- a hissing sound near gas-operated equipment

If you notice any of these problems you should get contact Nicor Gas at 888-642-6748.

What are PCBs?

PCBs are synthetic chemicals ranging from oily liquids to waxy solids. Because of evidence that PCBs persist in the environment and cause harmful effects, manufacture of PCBs was banned in 1977; existing PCBs continue to be used. EPA data indicate that PCBs are probable cancer-causing substances.

For more information

If you have any questions about EPA activities related to Park Ridge PCBs in gas lines, contact: Don de Blasio, EPA Community Involvement Coordinator, 312-886-4360, toll-free 800-621-8431, 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., weekdays, e-mail deblasio.don@epa.gov.

Information is also available online at epa.gov/region5/sites/nicorgas-pcb