

Mandated road never arrived

By **JOSH ROLNICK**
Staff Writer

EDISON The developer of the Durham Woods Apartments apparently ignored a 1983 mandate from the Township Planning Board to construct a viable rear exit road, leaving thousands of horrified residents only one escape route when their back yard erupted into a mammoth column of flame late Wednesday.

Faced with that prospect, many people decided not to use the main road; they fled into the Dismal Swamp, which surrounds the complex, seeking safety.

And some residents who attempted to use the only road said they found chaos, panic, and a steady stream of emergency vehicles trying to scramble into the maze-like complex on the same lone passageway: Reading Road.

A review of Planning Board documents and interviews with township officials yesterday indicates the developer, Ergon Construction Co. Inc., may also have ignored urgently worded letters from top township officials calling for construction of a permanent back-way-out.

One of those officials was former Edison Mayor Anthony M. Yelencsics, now deceased.

It was not immediately clear yesterday whether the lack of an adequate rear access road hindered emergency officials. Eight buildings were lost in the inferno, according to Edison police.

The apartments were lost despite an "emergency" access road,

which was constructed by the developer linking Talmadge Road to the apartment complex.

That road, which township officials said was kept chained shut, does not comply with Planning Board mandates, and appears to have been intended to be temporary, planning documents indicate.

Arthur Cifelli, Mayor George A. Spadaro's chief of staff, said the emergency road — located extremely close to the source of the inferno — was off-limits to firefighters battling the blaze due to sheer heat, and therefore couldn't have played a part in fighting the fire.

"That road's passable," Cifelli said. "The only reason they didn't use it was because it was right where the fire was. It was melting."

When asked about the road yesterday, Erwin Fisch — the principal investor in Ergon and the recipient of the letters — said he had no comment.

"When all the investigation and facts are in, then it's a different story," said Fisch. "But right now there's nothing I can say."

Residents of the complex waiting to return home early yesterday morning, however, had a lot to say.

"There's only one road out, that's the biggest problem," said 62-year-old Charles Lewis, a resident of Building 27 whose home was spared.

"I grabbed my 3-year-old grandson and jumped in my car, and I just started driving away from the fire across the lawn," explained Lewis, whose home was precariously close to "ground zero"

— the actual blast site. "But my car got stuck in the mud."

"It was crazy," added resident Rhona Lawson. "There was a mass stream of cars toward the exit."

The entrance into Durham Woods is Reading Road, which branches off New Durham Road and runs under Route 287 before it opens into the complex. To enter or leave the site, cars must go under the Route 287 overpass, creating a bottleneck effect.

The Planning Board seemed cognizant of possible danger when it approved the site plan, dated March 18, 1983.

The text of the approved plan states: "The property ... is an irregular shaped lot that has access to only one street, Reading Road, which access is through an underpass that goes beneath ... Route 287."

It adds that for the 1,000 units, "there is no other access to any other public street in the area."

And Reading Road is narrower than other township roads. The board, as part of the site plan, granted a variance to the developer allowing Reading Road to be 100 feet wide rather than the 200-foot standard in Edison.

According to the minutes of the March 2, 1983, Planning Board meeting, Durham Woods was unanimously approved under "the terms and conditions of the Edison Township Engineer's report dated February 3rd, 1983." The author of that document was former Engineer William M. Lund.

That report, obtained by The News Tribune yesterday, requires

the developer "to submit a profile of the proposed access road connection to Talmadge Road. This access road will consist of a 30-foot wide pavement conforming to township standards with a 2-foot stone shoulder on both sides."

According to Councilwoman Jane Tousman, who opposed the development at the time as a citizen activist, the developer agreed under the final plan to build a back road for residents.

"They promised a second road that was never built," Tousman said. "It's ludicrous to have one [way in and way out] for 1,000 units."

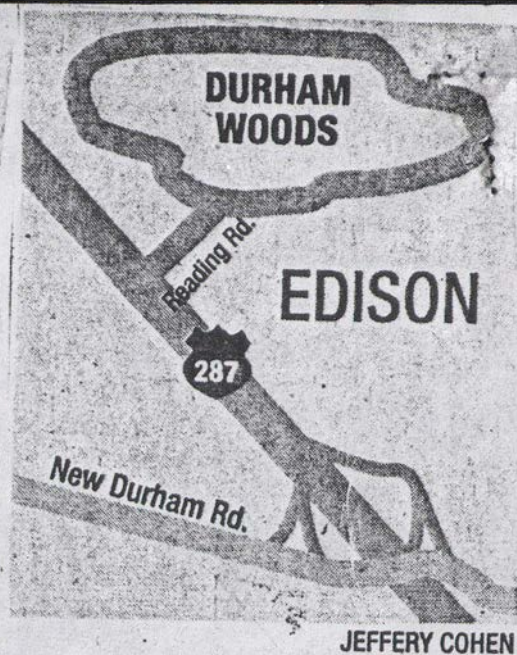
The March 2, 1983, minutes seem to substantiate that the planners agreed; they called for two mandatory "means of ingress and egress."

But four years after the approval — on July 10, 1987 — Planning Board Chairman William W. Bohn wrote to Fisch inquiring about the lack of a road.

"A condition of approval on the above application was the construction of a second means of access," the letter begins. "... We are requesting that you construct an emergency road at this time. This road will not have to meet all requirements as previously approved."

Apparently in response to such pressure, the developer constructed an "emergency" road that connected Talmadge Road to the western edge of Durham Woods that could be used by public safety vehicles.

But about seven months later,



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Yelencsics wrote another letter, demanding the "emergency" road be upgraded so residents could use it.

Yelencsics wrote to Fisch on Feb. 2, 1988, noting that "1,000 apartments have nearly been completed and we still do not have a viable alternate access.

"As a result of Planning Board requirements, in recent weeks you have constructed an emergency temporary access road which exists in a condition unusable for normal traffic flow," Yelencsics wrote. "This condition is unacceptable.

"I ask that you take immediate measures to render the access roadway in a usable condition, which includes a stabilized base pavement so that this roadway can be opened up for normal vehicular traffic," the mayor added.

Six years later, that mandate, and the Planning Board's requirements, seem to have gone unheeded.

Township officials said yesterday the beginning of the access road — in front of the Quality Materials Inc. asphalt plant — is paved.

But according to the officials, the rest is not paved. It is an 18-foot-wide, crushed stone roadway with no shoulder that has a locked gate at both ends and is not open to the public, they said.

More oil, gas-pipeline oversight pursued

Gas pipeline explosion
1994

By **STEPHEN POWER**
GANNETT NEWS SERVICE

Five years ago, a huge fireball lit up the sky over Edison. An underground gas line, weakened by construction equipment, burst and ignited a blaze so powerful it could be seen by airline pilots approaching New York City 50 miles away.

The explosion destroyed eight apartment buildings in the Durham Woods complex, displaced 1,500 people and caused \$25 million in damage. Outraged residents called for tougher regula-

tion of the nation's oil and gas pipelines. But 2½ years later, President Clinton signed legislation that actually loosened safety requirements for pipeline operators. He did so not only at the behest of Republican lawmakers but also his deputy energy secretary, who later resigned to work for a law firm that represents oil and gas interests.

As federal investigators try to determine what caused a similar pipeline explosion in Bellingham, Wash., this summer, a fa-

miliar pattern is playing out in Washington, D.C.: Once again, municipal leaders and environmentalists are calling for greater oversight of the oil and gas-pipeline industry. And once again, they're running into resistance from well-connected pipeline lobbyists, many of whom trade on their industry's political contributions and their experience as former oil and gas regulators.

"The bottom line is the oil and gas industry is tremendously

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powerful," said Edison Mayor George A. Spadaro, who testified before Congress in 1994 for tougher regulations. "And one of the reasons they're so powerful is that they're luring away powerful individuals who had positions in the bureaucracy they're now fighting."

In recent years, a number of influential government officials have left their jobs for more lucrative positions in the oil and gas industry. Admittedly, that's nothing new in Washington. But it's especially effective for the oil and gas industry, which already wields considerable clout through the millions of dollars it spends each year on campaign contributions.

As a result, a small coalition of municipal leaders across the country is trying to counter the pipeline industry's influence with a grass-roots lobbying effort aimed at their counterparts. One city, Fredericksburg, Va., has even prepared a videotape that includes footage of oil and

gas-pipeline explosions across the country, including a December 1989 spill that turned the city's drinking supply green.

But even Fredericksburg's leaders admit they have not found many allies, despite distributing more than 100 copies of the tape over the past three years.

"The only thing I can figure out is," said Jim Pates, city attorney for Fredericksburg, "it's not a sexy issue. ... When you have an oil tanker spill with big gooey beaches and dead birds, it's a lot more shocking to the public than a pipeline spill."

Each year, U.S. pipelines spill millions of gallons of hazardous liquids. Last year, they leaked nearly 8 million gallons - the most since 1991 and more than half the amount released during the 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster, according to federal records.

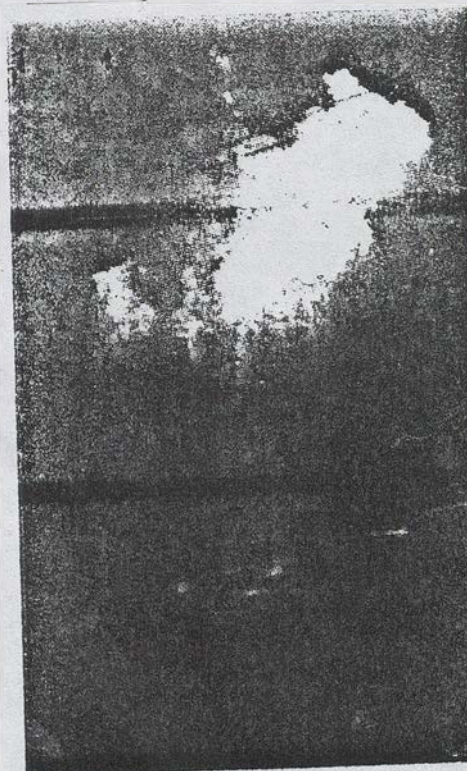
Although the number of pipeline accidents has remained constant in recent years, the potential threat to public safety has intensified as residential and commercial development adjacent to gas and liquid pipelines has accelerated, according to a 1996 National Transportation

Safety Board report.

In the past 15 years, hazardous liquid pipeline spills in the United States have killed 35 people and injured another 246, according to federal data - numbers the pipeline safety office calls "very low." The figures are worse for the 302,000-mile network of natural gas pipelines in the United States - 241 deaths and 1,105 injuries since 1986, or more than 17 deaths per year.

In the past two years, oil and gas interests have spent \$119 million to lobby lawmakers and regulators, and another \$22 million on political contributions. In the past three years, Congress has repealed minimum industry safety standards, such as testing of pipeline operators, and required pipeline regulators to perform a cost-benefit analysis before enacting any new rules.

Oil and gas-industry lobbyists say shipping oil and gas by pipeline is the cheapest form of transportation, delivering 65 percent of the nation's petroleum products to market. Industry statistics also indicate trucks carrying fuel are 35 times more likely to have a spill than pipelines.



■ The natural gas-fed blaze at the Durham Woods apartments in Edison in March 1994 routed hundreds of people and ruined much of the complex. Since then, few rules governing pipelines have changed.

Home News Tribune
1994

Aid offered to victims of explosion

By SUNITA BODDU
Home News Staff Writer

Agency offers kids trauma counseling

EDISON — The Jewish Family and Vocational Service of Northern Middlesex County will offer three free counseling sessions for children ages 6 to 12 who are suffering from trauma as a result of the Durham Woods explosion.

The sessions will be held on three consecutive Wednesdays, starting tomorrow and continuing April 6 and April 13. The one-hour sessions will begin at 4 p.m. The sessions are open to children of all religions.

To register, call (908) 738-5225 today between 9 a.m. and 8 p.m.

Hearing aid firm extends warranty

EDISON — Residents of the Durham Woods apartment complex who wear a particular brand of hearing aid can take advantage of a manufacturer's offer to extend its warranty coverage for victims of the blast who had their hearing aids damaged or lost in the disaster.

Siemens Hearing Instruments Inc. of Piscataway has extended its warranty period six months.

The extended warranty allows hearing-impaired residents who purchased Siemens hearing aids after Sept. 24, 1992 to have their

aids replaced or repaired free of charge.

For customers who purchased their Siemens aids before Sept. 24, the company will waive its \$25 service fee for repairs of damage resulting from the blast.

Requests for these emergency programs must be made by May 1 through the company representatives who originally dispensed the aids.

Lautenberg to tour gas blast site

Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg, D-N.J., and U.S. Secretary of Transportation Federico Pena will meet at 3 p.m. today at the relief headquarters at the Durham Woods apartment complex to tour the scene.

Following the tour, they will hold a press conference to announce measures aimed at preventing future pipeline accidents.

Midlantic offers discounted loans

Officials of Midlantic National Bank reported yesterday that the institution has approved 49 reduced-rate Catastrophe Aid Loans totaling \$310,000 and has an additional 15 applications pending for victims of the Edison explosion.

Midlantic also cashed more than \$350,000 in insurance claims checks and distributed emergency food and clothing from its Edison

branch office and a special satellite office established at the command center.

Midlantic also provided office space that is being used as the emergency command center at Durham Woods.

Toy company to donate gifts

A local toy company, which was previously headquartered a short distance from the Durham Woods apartment complex, is offering a free toy for infants and preschool children affected by the pipeline disaster.

To participate in the program, call Somerset-based Shelcore Toys' toll-free customer service number, 1-800-777-0453, between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. Ask for the Durham Woods "free toy" program coupon.

A coupon and a list of available toys will be sent. Return the completed coupon and proof of residence, such as a photocopy of a Red Cross emergency identification card, to Shelcore Toys and

the toy will be mailed in three to four weeks.

MCOSS nurses assisting residents

MCOSS Nursing Services, a visiting nurses association that serves Central New Jersey, is assisting the Red Cross with mental health counseling for victims of the Edison disaster.

Since Saturday, at least 16 MCOSS nurses have offered health assessments, referrals to community services and treatment for injuries at the relief headquarters at Edison Square Building on Route 27 and Talmadge Road and at hotel sites near the blast.

"At this point, we are helping wherever we are needed," said Sue Grinkevich, MCOSS regional manager, who is coordinating the agency's assistance. "Now that the initial shock is over, we are also helping Durham Woods residents cope with the next step — returning to their lives."

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Details kept quiet on settlement of Durham Woods explosion case

Gas pipeline explosion
1994

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By **DORE CARROLL**
STAFF WRITER

Financial terms of an out-of-court settlement ending the five-year litigation legacy of a horrific natural-gas pipeline explosion will remain confidential.

EDISON

Superior Court Judge Marina Corodemus yesterday confirmed that terms of the private settlement, reached after lengthy negotiations last week, would not be disclosed.

That means the 1,500 Durham Woods apartment complex tenants who fled their homes under a bright orange sky, through flying debris and shooting flames March 23, 1994, may never know who was responsible for the blast.

The pipeline owner, Texas Eastern Transmission Corp., reached a settlement in Superior Court, New Brunswick, Friday with five current and previous owners of the asphalt company that was adjacent to the pipeline.

A grand jury had determined the pipeline was struck by some piece of heavy equipment, resulting in a gouge. In court papers, the companies denied causing the rupture, and a liability trial scheduled to begin this week was aimed at determining who hit the pipe and when. Texas Eastern had maintained the gouge occurred sometime after its last inspection in 1986.

"We're very glad there was a settlement, and we did not have to go through the trial process," said Houston-based Texas Eastern spokesman John Barnett.

The lawsuit targeted Quality Materials, Inc., which owned the asphalt company in 1994, and its prior owners, including Halecrest Construction Co. and Haskell Excavation Co.

Texas Eastern already had paid close to \$65 million to settle 2,000 lawsuits brought by tenants and others near the explosion, and its suit was aimed at recouping that money.

Attorneys would not divulge how much the codefendants paid Texas Eastern or how close the figure was to the amount the pipeline company had paid out to blast claimants.

Roseland attorney Kevin Gardener, who represented Texas Eastern, said yesterday the settlement amount would remain secret as agreed upon by all parties.

"Both sides just felt more comfortable with that," Gardener said.

Blast survivor Nancy Kemps is not pleased with the conclusion. Five years after waking up to the traumatic explosion, Kemps, her husband and their son still have flashbacks during noisy thunderstorms and fireworks.

"We're damaged for life," Kemps said.

The huge blast destroyed eight apartment buildings, melted cars, and lit the night sky with fireballs. Residents were sent running for their lives; about 100 people were injured, and one woman later died of a heart attack.

Concerns over next pipeline

By MARK S. PORTER

Staff Writer

NT 3/25/94

The pipeline blast in Edison had officials in several Middlesex County towns wondering yesterday about another large natural-gas pipeline that is proposed for Central Jersey by the same company whose line blew up.

It is a company that has had its problems — some of them deadly.

Texas Eastern Transmission Corp., which also has been known as Tecon or Tetco, transports natural gas by pipeline from Texas and Louisiana to the Northeast and the Midwest.

The Houston-based company, a subsidiary of Panhandle Eastern Corp., is a major supplier of natural gas to public

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Plan to install next pipeline raises concern

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utilities in the region, with about 10,000 miles of pipelines traversing the land from Texas to the New York City area.

Texas Eastern, along with several other natural gas companies, wants to build a 30-inch pipeline that would run through Piscataway, Edison, Sayreville, and South Amboy.

A section called the Liberty Pipeline would then travel under Raritan Bay and out to sea, eventually surfacing on Long Island to provide natural gas to that area.

While not much has been heard about the project lately, it drew criticism when it was first proposed in September 1992.

"We've told them we want really no part of those pipelines through

Sayreville," said Sayreville Councilman Alan Haag yesterday.

Panhandle Eastern has a network of natural gas pipelines that account for about 12 percent of the nation's natural-gas consumption, according to a company profile.

The Texas Eastern pipeline that ruptured in Edison just before midnight Wednesday was built in 1961, company spokesman Guy Cantwell said.

The pipeline, located in a right-of-way for the Port Reading Railroad, was installed 22 years before the Durham Woods Apartments complex was approved for construction.

The 36-inch pipeline was tested in 1986 and inspected in 1992, according to Robert Cecil of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

Texas Eastern's presence in the

Central New Jersey area has involved several controversies.

In 1973, a huge storage tank owned by Texas Eastern that contained liquefied natural gas exploded in the Bloomfield section of Staten Island.

The detonation of the empty 600,000-barrel tank, which was built six years earlier, killed 40 workers at the facility when the concrete roofing of the eight-story structure collapsed on them as they repaired the tank's insulation lining.

Federal agencies cited the company for several safety violations that apparently led to the tragedy.

Federal officials said yesterday that Texas Eastern has improved its safety record greatly.

"Prior to the mid-'80s, [Texas Eastern] was probably not one of the safest operating companies out

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"Prior to the mid-'80s, [Texas Eastern] was probably not one of the safest operating companies out

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there," said Patricia Klinger, a spokeswoman for the Office of Pipeline Safety — the federal department that oversees the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of gas pipelines.

Texas Eastern in 1972 sought to build a synthetic gas plant on 200 acres — including 110 acres owned by the company — in South Plainfield near the Edison border.

The company had planned to ship naphtha by tanker to a site on Staten Island and then send it via a pipe under the Arthur Kill through Woodbridge and Edison to the South Plainfield facility.

Local officials successfully fought to block construction of the facility, which would have converted the naphtha, a petroleum product similar to lighter fluid, into natural gas.

Woodbridge Township threatened to sue Texas Eastern in 1982 over two 20-inch natural gas pipes that crossed Sucker Brook, a branch of the Rahway River. Municipal officials feared the pipes could break, and wanted them buried deeper under the creek.

The pipes had been installed in the early 1940s, as World War II raged, and were known as "war emergency" pipelines.

The township later reached an

agreement with Texas Eastern to split the costs of relocating the two pipes.

In 1987, the company began removing cancer-causing chemicals from the soil of its gas pipelines in 51 sites located in 12 states. The two New Jersey sites were in Linden and Lambertville.

Texas Eastern acknowledged it had buried residues containing polychlorinated biphenyls on the sites.

In 1986, in Lambertville, gas ignited while a segment of the pipeline was being moved. No one was injured, said Klinger.

And in 1987, a backhoe hit a pipeline in Linden. No injuries were reported, she said.

Four "major pipeline accidents" involving Texas Eastern prompted the National Transportation Safety Board in the 1980s to issue a series of recommendations to the company.

The accidents included the explosion of a 30-inch gas pipeline in Beaumont, Ky., on April 27, 1985, killing five people and injuring three in a blaze that destroyed several buildings and left a huge crater similar to the one adjacent to the Durham Woods Apartments in Edison.

State and federal agencies deter-

mined that corrosion likely caused the explosion. Authorities said the corrosion reduced the thickness of the pipeline walls from 0.375 inches to 0.2 inches, according to The Associated Press.

Pipeline corrosion also was blamed for an explosion in Kentucky in 1986 that injured three people.

All of these woes bothered local officials long before Wednesday's explosion.

Not surprisingly yesterday, the Middlesex County pipeline proposal prompted more questions.

"There has to be a concern for a proposal to put in a large pipeline," said Paul Abati, business administrator in Edison.

Haag said the companies involved, primarily Transco Energy Co., are still pursuing it through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which oversees such energy projects.

"This is not a dead issue at all. There's no doubt that they're trying to get their way," Haag said.

If anything, Haag said, the Edison explosion strengthened their resolve.

George Francy and Martha McKay contributed to this report.

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incomplete

Sorry! :)

'Buildings burned up one by one behind us'

By PETER GENOVESE, LEO REISBERG
and BERNHARD WARNER

Home News Staff Writers

HN 3/25/94

It looked and sounded, more than one survivor said, like the end of the world.

First a roar, like the sound of a jet engine, then a blast of wind and intense heat.

Cars melting, buildings ablaze, windows bursting.

The sky on fire.

"Nuclear holocaust," a shaken Rick Labbe said as he sat on a curb outside Edison High School.

"You see the movies; that's all you think of."

"I live 11 miles away, in Watchung," said Edison Superintendent of Schools Joseph Kreskey, at the high school yesterday. "I could hear the flames. It sounded like a giant blow torch."

"I thought we got bombed," said Edison High school student Orestes Jackson, who lived, like many of his classmates, in Durham Woods. "There was a mushroom cloud. Then it got so bright, I thought the sun was rising. And hot — I

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Heroes

Sidney and Rita White, 71, were escaping their home when they ran across another family — husband, wife, mother-in-law and infant.

"The family was standing in the middle of the street begging me to get them away," White said.

The Whites helped the family. ♦ OTHER HEROES, RELIEF EFFORTS STORY, PAGE A7

3/25/94 HN

Displaced tenants wait for word about homes

School cafeteria affords shelter

By BERNHARD WARNER
Home News Staff Writer

HN 3/25/94

EDISON — The scene at Edison High School was mass confusion as displaced tenants of the Durham Woods apartment complex anxiously waited for news about their homes.

Wave upon wave of numbed survivors walked in and out of the school's cafeteria from the early morning until noon to register, get food, clothing and medicine, and learn what they could about the fate of their homes.

Wearing all she had managed to retrieve before fleeing the explosion — a green coat, a T-shirt and sweats — Tonya Sewell, 34, was in shock as she talked about what she had left behind.

"I looked back and saw the flames and knew everything was gone," Sewell said.

She said the force of the explosion rocked her out of bed and il-

luminated the apartment with "a bright orange glow."

Sewell said that, when she opened the front door, a brilliant fireball appeared to be only a building away. The intense heat of the blaze, which was about 400 yards from her building, forced her to leave her car behind.

The seven-year resident of building nine was one of dozens of residents who received official word from Mayor George Spadaro yesterday that their homes had been reduced to rubble.

Police stationed at the high school communicated routinely with officials at a command center — located more than a mile away at Brunswick Avenue and Talmadge Road — in an effort to update the list of missing residents.

By noon, the crowd outside the high school began to thin and the number of missing and unaccounted for residents hovered around 100. By evening, that

number had dropped to under 50.

Connie Morrison, a township resident and one of 75 Red Cross volunteers at the shelter, said that as of noon yesterday about 2,000 names had been checked.

"There's still quite a few missing," Morrison said. She said displaced tenants should register with the Red Cross so emergency officials know they are alive.

Rabbi Dr. Bernhard H. Rosenberg, chaplain for the township Department of Public Safety, spent several hours at the high school comforting survivors, whom he described as "shell shocked."

"This truly is a war zone," Rosenberg said.

Suzanne B. Herrmann, state coordinating manager for the American Red Cross, said about 225 people slept on cots set up in the school's gymnasium yesterday morning, but that number swelled to more than 300 last night.

Herrmann said that friends and family of Durham Woods tenants looking for information about their whereabouts should call the Red Cross at (201) 538-2160.

SL 1/31/99

Trial date scheduled to fix responsibility for Edison gas blast

By Jim O'Neill

STAR-LEDGER STAFF

A March 15 trial date has been scheduled to determine responsibility for a 1994 natural gas pipeline explosion that destroyed eight apartment buildings and routed more than 1,500 tenants from their Edison homes.

The case pits Texas Eastern Transmission Corp. of Houston, owners of the 36-inch-diameter pipeline, against five other defendants who were among companies sued following the March 23, 1994, blast near the Durham Woods apartment complex in Edison.

The trial date was set after attorneys representing Texas Eastern reached settlements totaling \$65 million with tenants and other residents living near the apartment complex.

More than 100 people were injured as residents fled from a spectacular fireball fueled by natural gas that erupted about 300 yards from the apartment complex. One woman later died of a heart attack after she was unable to reach emergency services that were jammed with calls over the explosion.

The trial to determine liability for the explosion initially was scheduled to start this week, but was rescheduled to give attorneys additional time to prepare, court officials said.

Under an agreement aimed at settling tenants' lawsuits quickly, Texas Eastern attorneys began negotiating settlements and will now seek to recover a portion of the company's expenses from the five other companies named defendants in the litigation.

Among those firms are Quality Materials Inc., an asphalt company located at the scene of the blast, and two prior owners of the property, Haskell Excavation Co. and Halecrest Construction Co. Two remaining defendants have been identified as subsidiaries of Quality Materials.

Others initially named as defendants have been released from the case after court rulings found they had no liability for the explosion. Those defendants included Durham Woods Associates, the Boy Scouts of America, identified as a former landowner, and Edison Township, which had been accused of failing to adequately protect tenants.

In July 1996, a state grand jury reported that the pipeline might have been damaged years before the blast by unauthorized excavation that critically weakened the pipe, causing it to explode and set off fires at the apartment complex, located at Route 287 and New Durham Road. The report did not prove who was responsible for the damage to the pipe.

Fatalities put gas line firm on its guard

Gas pipeline explosion
1994

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HN

Feds praise company's recent safety efforts

By SARAH WOOD
Homa News Staff Writer

The Texas company whose gas line ruptured in an Edison housing complex yesterday struggled over the last decade to put behind it three deadly accidents.

One woman died and hundreds were forced from their homes early yesterday when a 36-inch gas main owned by Texas Eastern Transmission Corp. burst in a fiery explosion.

"Back in the late 1980s, they would have been average," said Patricia Klinger, spokeswoman for

the federal Bureau of Pipeline Safety, a division of the Department of Transportation. "Now they are one of the more aggressive users of (safety) technology. Now they are using the best technology out there."

Klinger referred to accidents subjected to the same investigations the National Transportation Safety Board is conducting in Edison.

■ In Jackson, La., in 1984, five people were killed and 23 people were injured when Texas Eastern, Houston, was completing replacement of a stretch of pipe. The gas

was turned back on at high pressure before heavy equipment had completed filling in an excavation, the board found.

■ In 1985, five people were killed and three were injured near Beaumont, Ky., when pipe corrosion was not detected, the board report said.

■ In 1986, three people were injured near Lancaster, Ky., when pipe corrosion was not corrected properly.

The board determines causes of serious accidents and recommends prevention.

Locally, Klinger said, the DOT

issued no violations for the stretch of pipe that runs from Franklin through Hillsborough and includes the site of yesterday's blast.

The line passed routine DOT examinations as recently as 1992 and 1987, Klinger said. The DOT inspected the ground above the 36-inch steel pipe, and reviewed the company's maintenance plans and results of the company's testing of the line.

Most of the testing in the gas line industry is done by the companies themselves, Klinger said. It's the companies that are liable and it is in their interest to be safe, she said.

Texas Eastern follows the industry standard of monitoring gas

pressure levels and an electric field used to discourage and detect corrosion 24 hours a day, said Tony Turbeville, a company spokesman.

In addition, he said, the company makes aerial checks of its lines weekly, and periodically uses a sophisticated corrosion-testing method called "smart pigs," or X-rays of each linear inch of the pipe.

Still, Texas Eastern has not been able to elude the attention locally of state Department of Environmental Protection and Energy officials, DEPE spokesman Jim Berzok said.

In 1991, the company was fined \$1,000 for failure to report

a gas leak at its Linden facility, and in 1989, the state fined the company \$1 million for oversight costs related to PCB contamination at its Linden, Lambertville and Hanover compression stations, and entered with the company into a consent order requiring the company to clean it up.

The order was part of an unusually costly 14-state, 89-site civil case in which the federal Environmental Protection agency fined the company \$15 million in penalties, \$1.5 million in oversight fees, and ordered the company to complete an estimated \$500 million clean-up operation, Wendy Butler, an EPA spokeswoman said.

Briefs

Lawmaker to end
six-decade career

JACKSON, Miss. — Rep. Jamie Whitten, who during 53 years in office went from segregationist to a supporter of such Great Society programs as food stamps, is giving up the job he has held longer than anyone else in Congress.

The 83-year-old Democrat announced his retirement yesterday. Whitten took office on Nov. 4, 1941, a month before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Rep. Jim Bacchus of Florida also said he will retire. He and Whitten are the 40th and 41st House members to announce they will leave Congress after this term.

On Jan. 6, 1992, Whitten broke the record held by Georgia Democrat Carl Vinson for longest service in the House.

Law firm couriers
deny coverup role

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — The two couriers who shredded documents at Hillary Rodham Clinton's former law firm say they don't believe the files had anything to do with the Whitewater investigation.

Jeremy Hedges, 20, and Clayton Lindsey, 19, also say they have left the Rose Law Firm for other jobs.

The two college students acknowledged earlier this year they were asked to shred documents around the time a special prosecutor was appointed to investigate the Whitewater affair.

Special counsel Robert Fiske subpoenaed them to testify before a grand jury.

Both have said the files they shredded had the initials of the late Vincent W. Foster Jr., the deputy White House counsel found dead last year in what police have ruled a suicide.

Shuttle OK, launch
set tomorrow

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — NASA aimed for a launch of Endeavour tomorrow after the spaceship's engines were found to be free of a dangerous defect discovered in the shuttle fleet.

The weather may not cooperate, however. The chances of good weather for the 8:06 a.m. liftoff were put at 40 percent because of a cold front headed this way.

Endeavour will lift off with a crew of six and a set of highly sophisticated radar instruments that will survey the world's deserts, mountains, volcanoes, forests, farmland and oceans during the nine-day flight.

Yeltsin approves
military bases

MOSCOW — President Boris Yeltsin has approved the Russian military's plans to establish about 30 permanent bases in neighboring former Soviet republics.

Yeltsin's decision reflects Russia's increasingly active military role in what it calls the "near abroad," where it has stationed an estimated 16,000 troops.

The ITAR-Tass news agency quoted Gen. Mikhail Kolesnikov, chief of Russia's general staff, as saying that some of the 30 bases would be formed from existing units, such as the Skrunda early-warning radar facility in Latvia and the 201st motorized rifle division in Tajikistan.

It was not immediately clear how many of the bases would be new, or whether Yeltsin's decision would result in any substantial expansion of Russian troops abroad.

Pope decries U.N.
birth control plan

VATICAN CITY — Pope John Paul II yesterday issued an unusually pointed attack on a U.N. population plan, saying it permits the "systematic death of the unborn."

The Holy See already has formally registered its opposition to the draft of a document being prepared for the International Conference on Population and Development, to take place this September in Cairo, Egypt.

The document advocates access to contraception and safe abortions.

Russian radical
visits topless bar

HELSINKI, Finland — Vladimir Zhirinovsky, the controversial Russian ultranationalist, made headlines yesterday by visiting a striptease club after laying wreaths on the graves of Finnish presidents.

Zhirinovsky spent 40 minutes Tuesday night at King's Kakadu Club, where he watched a Jamaican woman and a Belarussian woman strip to their G-strings, had a couple of drinks and gave a TV interview.

The Jamaican woman came to his table briefly, providing photographers with shots of her from behind and Zhirinovsky's face from the front.

Huge fire scorches
area of Nicaragua

MANAGUA, Nicaragua — An eight-day forest fire destroyed about 30,000 acres in remote regions near the Honduran border, the chief of the national forest service said yesterday.

Roberto Araquistán said the blaze that was brought under control last week torched the La Camana hill area of Nueva Segovia province. Efforts to fight the blaze were complicated by mines strewn across the area during Nicaragua's civil war in the 1980s, as well as the rough terrain and winds up to 30 mph.

Danish U.N. guard
shot in north Iraq

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — A Danish policeman guarding food shipments in northern Iraq was shot in the chest in the latest attack on U.N. guards, aid workers and journalists in the region.

The shooting Tuesday came the same day the United States condemned the attacks, and suggested the Iraqi government may be responsible. Iraq called the charge an "absurd accusation."

The policeman was in critical condition and was taken to a hospital in Kuwait, the Danish Foreign Ministry said.

The 41-year-old Dane, whose identity was withheld, is one of 50 Danish policemen in the 300-person U.N. guard corps that has protected transport in the U.N.-protected zone, which was imposed after a Kurdish rebellion in 1991.

— The Associated Press



Dedicated to Your Good Health!

Make a Date to Attend Our Free Community Health Forums.

JFK Medical Center is pleased to present a series of free Community Health Forums on timely health care topics for the public. General programs are held in the JFK Fitness & Conference Center, 70 James St. in Edison (across from JFK Medical Center), at 8 p.m. unless otherwise noted.

PREREGISTRATION IS NECESSARY FOR ALL PROGRAMS!

PLEASE CALL (908) 321-7JFK (7535) MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY FROM 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

APRIL

WED.
13

PROSTATE CANCER: EARLY DETECTION AND TREATMENT

Attend a Free Prostate Cancer Educational Seminar and become eligible for a free PSA (prostate specific antigen) blood test and prostate examination.

Featuring William Terens, M.D., urologist.

Prostate cancer will strike nearly 132,000 men this year and kill more than 34,000. It is the most common tumor, and is the second leading cause of cancer death in American men. Men should get examined regularly because prostate cancer usually develops without noticeable symptoms until it reaches advanced stages. Learn about the signs, the diagnostic test, and the treatment and management of prostate cancer.

While no test is 100 percent accurate in detecting prostate cancer, a digital rectal examination with the PSA blood test is currently the most effective way to diagnose the disease at an early and potentially curable stage.

Preregistration is required. Prerequisites are that those attending are over age 50, or over 40 with a family history of the disease; not currently under the care of a urologist for a prostate condition; and that they provide a name of a doctor to receive results. Enrollment is limited to the first 200 men who live in Edison, Metuchen and Woodbridge Township, or who have a JFK physician. This screening should be done once a year.

You must attend this educational seminar to receive an appointment for the PSA and prostate examination which will be conducted on April 20 by JFK urologists.

FAMILY HEARTSAVER CPR

These invaluable six-hour CPR courses will provide parents and child care providers with the basic skills necessary to save the life of an adult, infant or child. Additional information about cardiovascular disease, prudent heart living, signs of a heart attack and accessing emergency services will also be provided.

These courses will involve mannequin skills practice. Upon course completion, the participant will be given an American Heart Association Level A/B CPR card. Preregistration is required. Class size is limited.

Dates:	Wednesday, April 13	Part I	6:30 to 10:00 p.m.	JFK Medical Center Auditorium 4
	Wednesday, April 20	Part II	6:30 to 10:00 p.m.	JFK Medical Center Auditorium 5
	Friday, April 29	Parts I & II	9 a.m. to 3 p.m.	JFK Medical Center Auditorium 5

Cost: \$35 per person

Contact: Education Department (908) 321-7588

JFK Medical Center is an accredited Basic Life Support Training Center of the American Heart Association, New Jersey Affiliate. As such, JFK Medical Center is authorized to charge fees for CPR training courses. These fees do not represent income going to the American Heart Association or any of its components.

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASES (COPD)

The JFK Health & Fitness Center is pleased to present a Free three-part education series on COPD, which encompasses bronchitis, emphysema and bronchiectasis. Recurrent obstruction of airflow is common to each of these diseases. To be discussed are ways to preserve and facilitate optimal respiratory function, which includes breathing techniques, exercise progression, medications, dietary regimen and alterations in the activities of daily living.

MON. MEDICAL MANAGEMENT & TREATMENT OF COPD

Featuring Stuart Hochron, M.D., pulmonologist.

MON. COPD & NUTRITION: EATING AND FOOD CHOICE MODIFICATIONS

Featuring Jean Zipprich, R.D., dietitian.

MON. COPD & EXERCISE: BREATHING TECHNIQUES & EXERCISE PROGRESSION

Featuring John Mores, M.S., exercise physiologist.

MON. SPASTIC COLON

Featuring Marc Wolfman, M.D., gastroenterologist.

Learn the facts about Irritable Bowel Syndrome, its treatment, and the effect of diet and stress on the disease. Know the difference between spastic colon and ulcerative colitis, Crohn's Disease and colitis.

'I CAN COPE'

The "I Can Cope" series, sponsored by JFK Medical Center and American Cancer Society, is a four-week course open to all cancer patients, their families and friends. The course is designed to help cancer patients regain control over their lives by facilitating understanding of the physical, social and emotional impact of the disease.

TUES. APR. 26 Overview of Cancer Treatment: Chemotherapy Bernard Kulper, M.D., medical oncologist.
Nursing Management of Chemotherapy Anne Anselmo, R.N., M.S.N., O.C.N.

TUES. MAY 3 Radiation Therapy Mark Macher, M.D., radiation oncologist.
Nursing Management of Radiation Therapy Linda Deckenback, R.N.
Cancer Survivor American Cancer Society volunteer.

TUES. MAY 10 The Role of Nutrition In The Treatment of Cancer Jean Zipprich, R.D., dietitian.
Community Resources Erika Kolb, A.C.S.W.
Living Will Caryl Distel, M.A., patient representative.

TUES. MAY 17 Role of Exercise For Those With Cancer Debbie Straka, P.T., physical therapist. Suzanne McMinn, O.T., occupational therapist.
Stress Management For Those With Cancer & Family Laura Nitka, M.S.W., social worker.

TIME: Tuesday — 6:30 to 8 p.m.
PLACE: JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute Inpatient Rehabilitation Gym
FACILITATORS: Erika Kolb, A.C.S.W.; Patricia Dolphin, R.N.
For more information or to register for the program, contact (908) 321-7JFK(7535).

SUMMER PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN

More than eight innovative small group programs are again being offered by the Department of Pediatric Rehabilitation of the Johnson Rehabilitation Institute, affiliated with JFK Medical Center. Groups begin the week of June 27 and run through August 22.

Each nine-week group program has a specific focus, such as fine or gross motor skills, language development, social skills, aquatic endurance and coordination, communications/problem-solving skills, recreational experiences, dexterity, cooperative play or handwriting issues.

In addition to these many special programs, individual, medical, therapeutic, educational, and psychological diagnosis, evaluation and intervention services are available for children from birth to adolescence.

Fees vary according to individual programs, screenings are required and group enrollment is limited.

Call the Department of Pediatric Rehabilitation at (908) 548-7610 to request a brochure, further information or a screening appointment. There is a nominal fee for the screening appointment.

INFRARED LISTENING SYSTEM

An Infrared Listening System is available in all meeting rooms at the JFK Conference Center to assist individuals with hearing impairments. The system is designed to carry sound from the speaker (or other source) directly to the listener, thereby enhancing listening in the facility.

This system can be set up upon request and is easy to use. A special microphone is worn by the speaker and headsets are worn by the listeners. Individuals with a wide range of hearing losses can benefit from this device.

Please make arrangements to use the Infrared Listening System when you register for a program.

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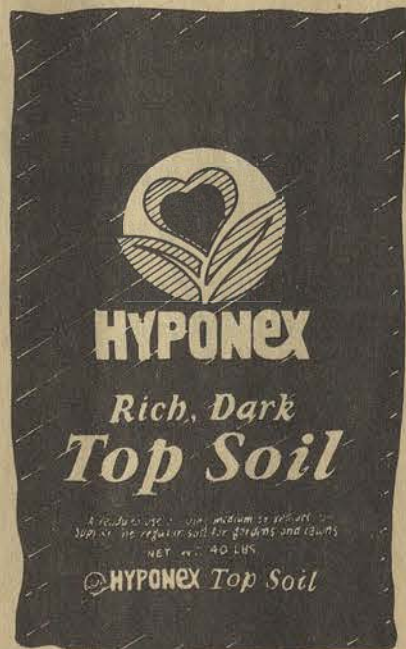
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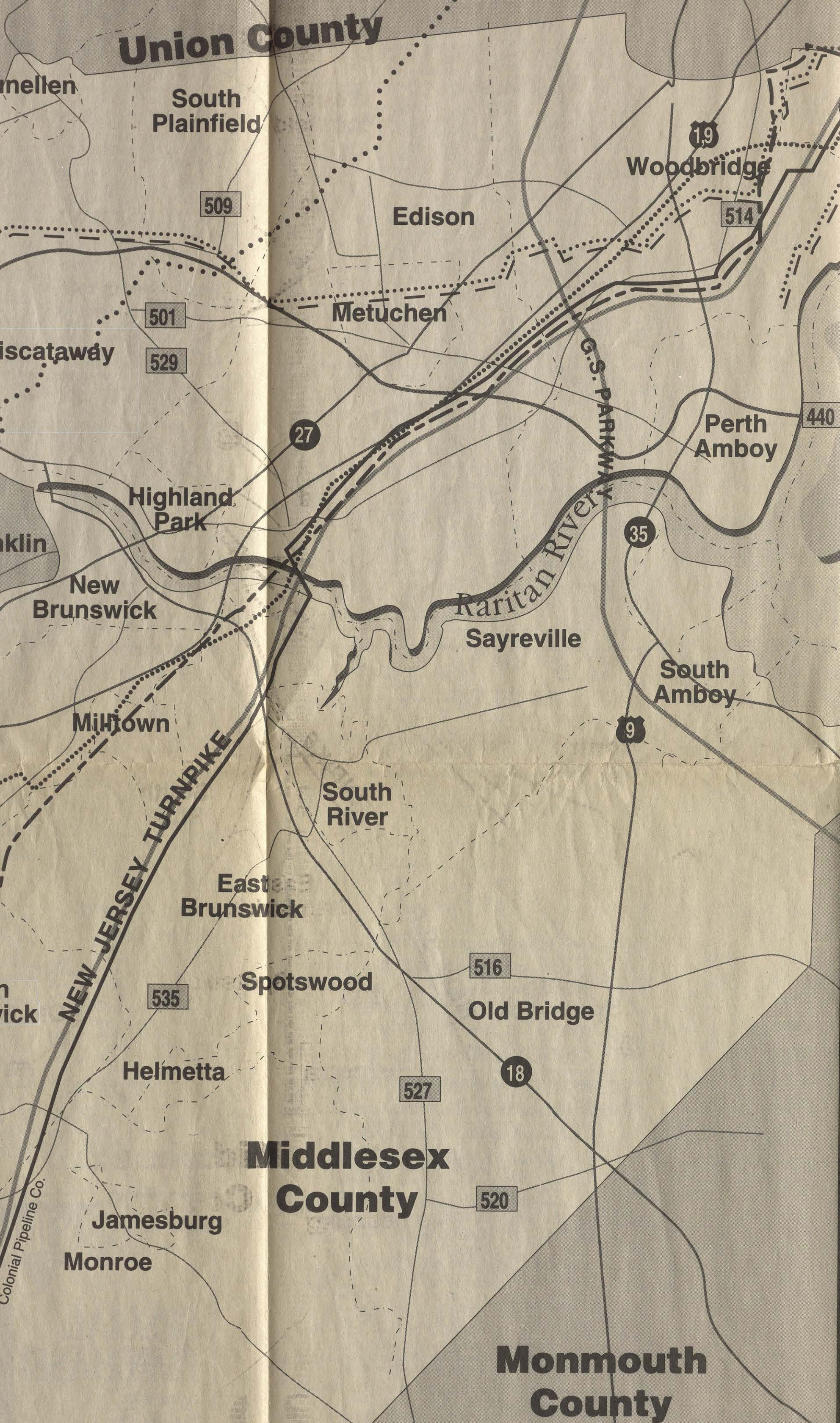
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Explosion Edison pipelines

on lines in Central New Jersey



Transmission lines

Six transmission lines run through Middlesex County and Franklin Twp. in Somerset County are on file with the Middlesex County Hazardous Materials Unit.

Texas Eastern Transmission Corp., Houston, transports natural gas through Franklin, Piscataway, South Plainfield, Metuchen, Edison, Woodbridge and Carteret.

Colonial Pipeline Co., Atlanta, transports natural gas through Cranbury, Monroe, South Brunswick, East Brunswick, South River, Edison, Woodbridge and Carteret.

Transcontinental Pipeline Co., Houston, transports natural gas through South Brunswick, North Brunswick, Milltown, East Brunswick, Edison, Woodbridge and Carteret.

Buckeye Pipeline Co., Pennsylvania, transports heating oil, diesel fuel, commercial jet fuel, military jet fuel and various grades of gasoline through Franklin, Edison, Carteret, Piscataway, South Plainfield, Edison, Metuchen and Woodbridge.

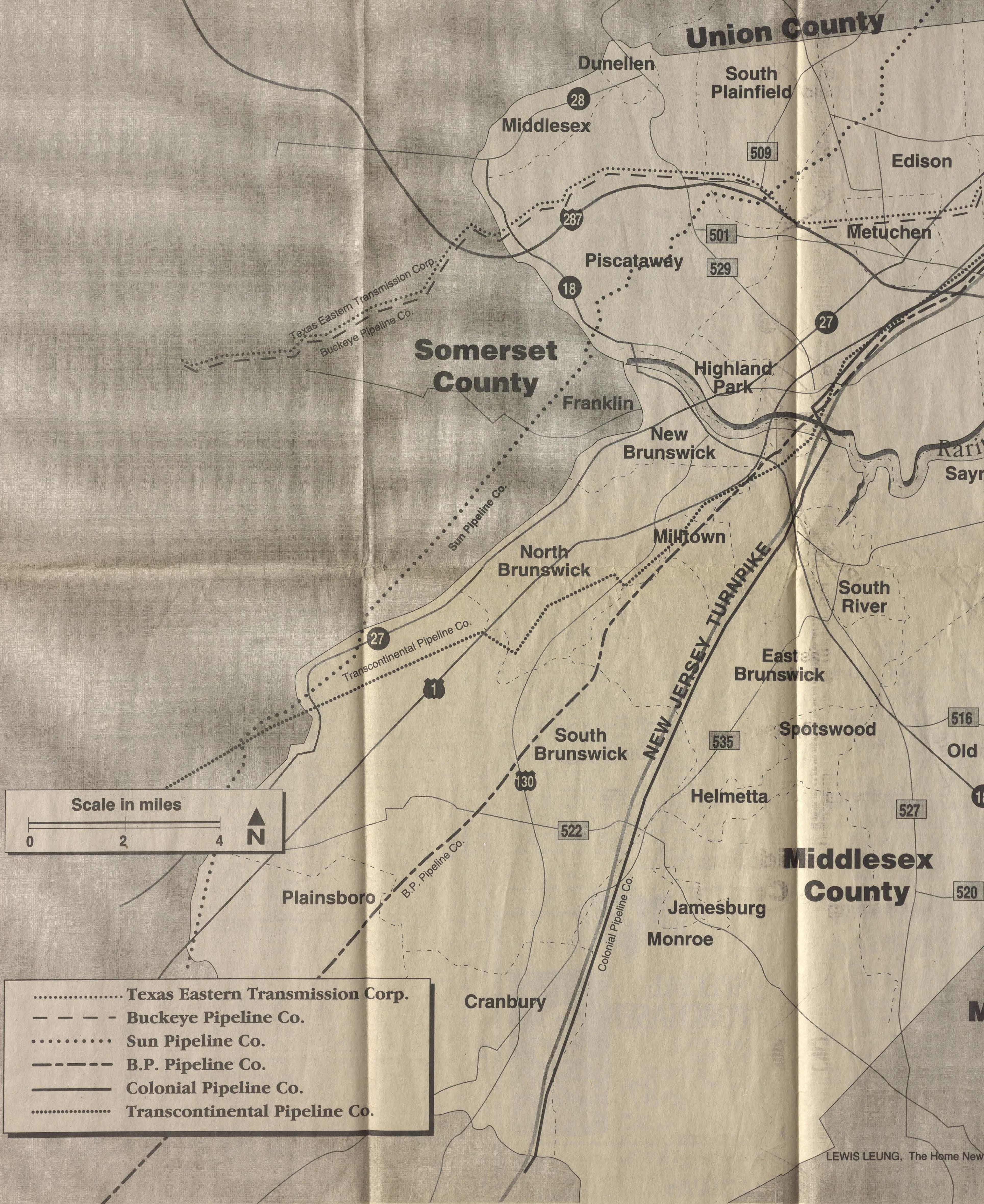
Sun Pipeline Co., Linden, transports regular leaded gasoline, unleaded gasoline, premium unleaded gasoline, fuel oil, jet fuel through Plainsboro, South Brunswick, Piscataway, South Plainfield and Edison.

A partnership of **BP/Coastal/Chevron Pipeline Co.**, Cleveland, transports kerosine, jet fuel, diesel fuel and gasoline through Plainsboro, South Brunswick, East Brunswick, Milltown, Edison, Woodbridge and Carteret.

For general information, call:

Texas Eastern Trans. Corp. 1-800-550-5784
Colonial Pipeline Co. (713) 439-2000
Buckeye Pipeline Co. (215) 820-8300
Sun Pipeline Co. (908) 862-5482
B.P. Pipeline Co. (216) 586-4141
Transcontinental Pipeline Co. (713) 439-2000

Major transmission lines in C



PULDA

Continued from page A1

farms, owned by Pulda and Ed Otken, under a new designation for agriculture and recreation. Otken's land would be "down-zoned" from its current industrial zone to residential, with one home per 6 acres. Pulda's land, already zoned residential, also would be "downzoned" from its current one house per 2 acres to one home per 6 acres.

They also soften the Planning Board's endorsement of the township's bid to acquire the land for a park.

Pulda said he did not want to comment on the rezoning proposal until he has discussed it with his lawyer, but farming advocates yesterday argued ardently that the township stands to gain much more from the downzoning approach than the farmers do.

Pulda's farm, for example, would be worth two-thirds less than it is now, said Helen Heinrich, research associate with the state Farm Bureau, the largest farmers' advocacy group in the state.

"It seems rather suspicious that (the downzoning) is arbitrary and capricious. There is a certain question whether it has been done in anticipation of picking up the land later at a much lower price than it is worth now," she said.

"If we are concerned about preserving open space, we should be concerned about what downsizing does to the farmers' desire and incentive to farm," said Soji Adelaja, an associate professor of agricultural economics at Cook College. "The best way to keep farmland is to keep it profitable."

The advocates said farmers' profits depend largely on the equity of their lands, on which they need to borrow to keep operations alive in lean years and when they want to change their operations. It gives the farmers a chance to recoup losses by selling part or all of their land.

If the Planning Board does approve the recommendations, and the council goes on to approve a corresponding new development ordinance, the township may have an expensive prospect on its hands.

According to Stephen George, president of the Farm Bureau, case law established by the July 1991 state Supreme Court decision on Gardner vs. the the Pinelands Commission requires that a municipality not single out any type of land owners — such as farmers — for downzoning.

That means, George said, that all of the township's 555 undeveloped acres would have to be similarly downzoned.

The state Policy on Equity, while an advisory document, also calls for fair compensation to those who stand to lose from downzoning, Horzepa said.

ABUSE

Continued from page A1

understand when they're not feeling safe."

In 1992, New Jersey had 16,939 substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect, according to the state Division of Youth and Family Services.

Though still alarmingly high, that number is 10 percent lower than the year before. Substantiated cases dropped in the two previous years as well.

State officials say it's still too early to fully explain the decrease, but CAP officials are hopeful that eight years of offering their program throughout New Jersey have helped contribute to the abuse-rate decline.

They also hope April's designation as Child Assault Prevention Month will further spread their message that it's important to teach children ways they can stay safe.

For preschoolers, that safety lesson comes from Diane and her friend Tommy, two life-sized dolls who meet a scary man on their way to Diane's grandmother's house.

Tommy, Diane and some other characters came to life yesterday at South County Day Care under the direction of CAP instructors Alba Cisco and Rhoda Lucash. The pair taught a class of 3-year-olds

and 5-year-olds as part of a three-day program at the school.

The Tommy-Diane scenario goes like this:

Before they leave home, Diane's mom asks Diane if she remembers the rules for staying safe.

"Yes," says the pig-tailed little girl. "Walk on the sidewalk. Hold your head up high. And if you meet someone you don't know, you don't have to talk to them."

In case that didn't sink in, when they leave the house, Tommy asks Diane to go over the rules again. This time she adds more tips, showing Tommy how to stand a safe distance from strangers and how to yell loudly if he needs help.

Another tip Diane gives Tommy is that if someone grabs him, he can hit, punch, scratch, kick, or do whatever it takes to get away.

Diane and Tommy put their skills to the test when a strange man appears en route and tells them he has puppies in his car and wants to be their friend.

Armed with their rules, Diane and Tommy yell loudly, run away, and arrive safely at Grandma's house, where Grandma asks them to describe the man and calls the police.

A class of 5-year-olds and 3-year-olds each watched the dolls closely and practiced enthusiastically how to do everything Tommy and Diane did.

They seemed to like the yelling best.

BLAST

Continued from page A1

investigation into the cause of the pipeline rupture, found several gouges on the 36-inch main that they attributed to heavy construction machinery.

Both Dave Schratwieser, a spokesman for the Attorney General's Office and Jim Berzok, a spokesman for what is now called the Department of Environmental Protection and Energy, said late yesterday that they could not immediately provide information on the 1982 investigation.

The pipeline, owned by Houston-based Texas Eastern, exploded just before midnight on March 23, demolishing eight nearby Durham Woods apartment buildings and leaving 2,000 residents temporarily homeless.

Residents of the eight leveled buildings and tenants of another four still deemed uninhabitable remain without homes.

Although mortgage deeds on record with Middlesex County name Haskell Excavating Co. as the owners of the property between 1978 and 1984, the newspaper article identifies Buck Brothers as the operators of the property.

Individuals who have done business at the asphalt company, now owned by Quality Materials Inc., also said it was run by the Buck family.

Buck Brothers Inc. was owned by brothers Raymond and John Buck, Raymond's wife said last night.

Esther Buck said her husband was out of town on a business trip and could not be reached for comment. John Buck also could not be reached.

Leslie Grabowski, president of Haskell Excavating, has not returned telephone calls to his office. A receptionist answering the telephone at the company refused to answer any questions about the company, including its relationship with the Bucks.

The Bucks, Haskell and Grabowski are partners in BGH Associates, an East Brunswick recycling company on Harts Lane, which was repeatedly fined for dumping and operating without local, county or state permits. As a way of resolving a dispute with the township, BGH agreed to cease operating as a recycling company and is now asking for Planning Board approval for the construction of a storage warehouse on the same site.

Esther Buck said her husband was involved in Haskell Excavating Corp., but she did not know in what capacity.

Texas Eastern spokesman James W. Hart Jr. said he knew of the drums reportedly being found on the property but declined to discuss their significance.

"I have seen a copy of (the newspaper report)," Hart said. "But I have no way of knowing what the meaning of that is. I'm aware of it, but I can't make a connection."

In the meantime, the Attorney General's Office and the Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office are continuing their investigation into drums found on the property last week. Two 55-gallon drums identified by investigators as having "1979" marked on them, a 5-gallon container and another container of unknown size were pulled from the ground 40 feet from the ruptured Texas Eastern natural gas pipeline.

"We're still awaiting the tests on the drums that we took samples from," said Schratwieser.

Township Director of Health John Grun, who was a health official in 1982, said he "vaguely remembers" the dumping at the site. He said he remembers that the investigation was turned over to the DEP.

Arthur Cifelli, chief of staff for Mayor George Spadaro, also said he was aware of the 1982 investigation. He said Township Attorney Louis Rainone had been instructed to retrieve all relevant documents from DEPE.

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Colonial Pipeline Company

Public Awareness Brochure
Folleto de Conciencia Pública

Facts That You Should Know
Datos Que Usted Debería Saber

Edison
Explosion



Please share this information with all members of your household
Por favor comparta esta información con todos los miembros de su hogar

Who is Colonial Pipeline?

Colonial Pipeline Company is an interstate common carrier of refined petroleum products throughout the Eastern United States. We provide the essential petroleum products that, as part of America's Energy Lifeline, sustain our nation's industry and our economy as well as our individual households. Colonial Pipeline operates over 5,500 miles of pipeline from Texas to New York harbor, which supply the growing energy needs of Americans.

For more information, please visit our website at www.colpipe.com

Why are petroleum pipelines important?

Pipelines are an essential part of our daily lives. **Comfort** - our homes are heated by the product supplied by pipelines; **Safety and Security** - our military depends upon the fuels carried by pipelines; **Transportation** - our cars are powered by product carried by pipelines... essentially our homes and workplaces are indirectly enhanced and operated by this energy lifeline. Colonial Pipeline plays an essential and safe role in the transportation of petroleum products to meet the energy needs of the United States.

How do I know if there is a pipeline underground nearby?

Yellow, black and red marker signs are located at frequent points along the right of way. (An example of Colonial's warning sign is given on this page.)

These warning signs provide vital information regarding Colonial, product being transported and phone numbers to contact Colonial Pipeline. Pipeline markers appear at all locations where the pipelines cross roads, rivers and streams, railroads and other locations. While pipeline markers are helpful indicators of a pipeline, these markers are used to show approximate location of a pipeline only. Markers do not reveal the exact location or depth of a pipeline.

Information regarding pipelines operating in your community may be obtained by accessing the National Pipeline Mapping System (NPMS) www.npms.rspa.dot.gov/. NPMS can provide a list of pipeline operators and operator contact information in your area.

How do I contact Colonial Pipeline?

If you have any questions, please contact Colonial Pipeline at **678-762-2255**.

Informed residents along our pipeline will help us achieve our goal of "zero spills, zero errors" and continued safe operations within our communities. For information regarding our Integrity Management Program, contact us through our website www.colpipe.com, or at **678-762-2255**.

How do I recognize a leak?

Pipeline accidents are extremely rare. Residents along or in the vicinity of a pipeline need to be able to recognize these:

- **Petroleum product patches** on the ground or a **sheen on water** if near a river, stream or lake.
- Spots of **dead vegetation**.
- **Unusual noises** coming from a pipeline or near a marker. A leak can make a hissing or roaring sound depending on the magnitude of the leak.
- Any **unusual odor**. A liquid petroleum leak will be accompanied by a strong scent. Each liquid petroleum product has its own characteristic odor.



Si usted sospecha que hay un derrame en el oleoducto, comuníquese con el departamento de bomberos local de inmediato. Los bomberos saben la ubicación de los oleoductos y están entrenados para bloquear las áreas afectadas lo más pronto posible.

¿Qué debo hacer si hay una fuga en el oleoducto?

En el caso improbable que haya una fuga en el oleoducto, su seguridad personal tiene primera prioridad. Los residentes deberían ser conscientes de las siguientes acciones y precauciones básicas:

- No tenga contacto con el producto derramado.
- Abandone el área inmediatamente y alerte a otros en las cercanías, si es necesario.
- Evite crear chispas o fuentes de calor que podrían causar que el líquido y/o los vapores se incendien. No prenda un cigarrillo, arranque ningún motor, use un teléfono ni incluso encienda ni apague una luz eléctrica.
- Apague cualquier maquinaria que esté funcionando.
- Si ocurre una fuga o una nube de vapor mientras usted se encuentra en un automóvil, no maneje dentro del área. Proceda cautelosamente alejándose de la zona.
- Una vez alejado del área, notifique a su departamento de bomberos local y a la compañía del oleoducto. Póngase en contacto con Colonial Pipeline llamando gratis al **1-800-926-2728**.

Por favor esté preparado para dar la ubicación, una descripción de la fuga, su nombre y un número de contacto.

¿Cómo puedo evitar los accidentes en el oleoducto?

Una de las causas más grandes de los accidentes son originados por "daños por terceras personas" - alguien excavando en la línea de tubería. Para ayudar a prevenir dichos accidentes, los estados tienen un sistema de notificación de excavaciones conocido como One-Call (Una-Llamada). Cuando usted llama a este número, el centro de operaciones de One-Call (Una-Llamada) notifica a la compañía del oleoducto (o a otra organización que tenga servicios subterráneos) en el área que se propone excavar. La compañía enviará un representante para marcar con exactitud los lugares donde el oleoducto está enterrado. **Una lista completa de los números de One-Call (Una-Llamada) del estado es proporcionada en este folleto con el sistema de mapas de Colonial.** La compañía enviará a un representante local al lugar de la excavación para marcar la ubicación exacta de la línea de tubería o el servicio de utilidades enterrados.

Siempre llame por teléfono al sistema de One-Call (Una-Llamada) del estado antes de cavar dentro de las cercanías de un letrero de un oleoducto para evitar cualquiera de los riesgos potenciales asociados con el daño del oleoducto.

Colonial Pipeline ha obtenido éxito con nuestro Resident Watcher Program (Programa de Residente Vigilante) para alertar a la compañía de los riesgos potenciales al oleoducto teniendo a los residentes locales vigilando el derecho al paso a lo largo del sistema de nuestro oleoducto. Colonial Pipeline también tiene un programa de recompensa en el caso de que Ud. nos notifique de peligros potenciales del oleoducto.

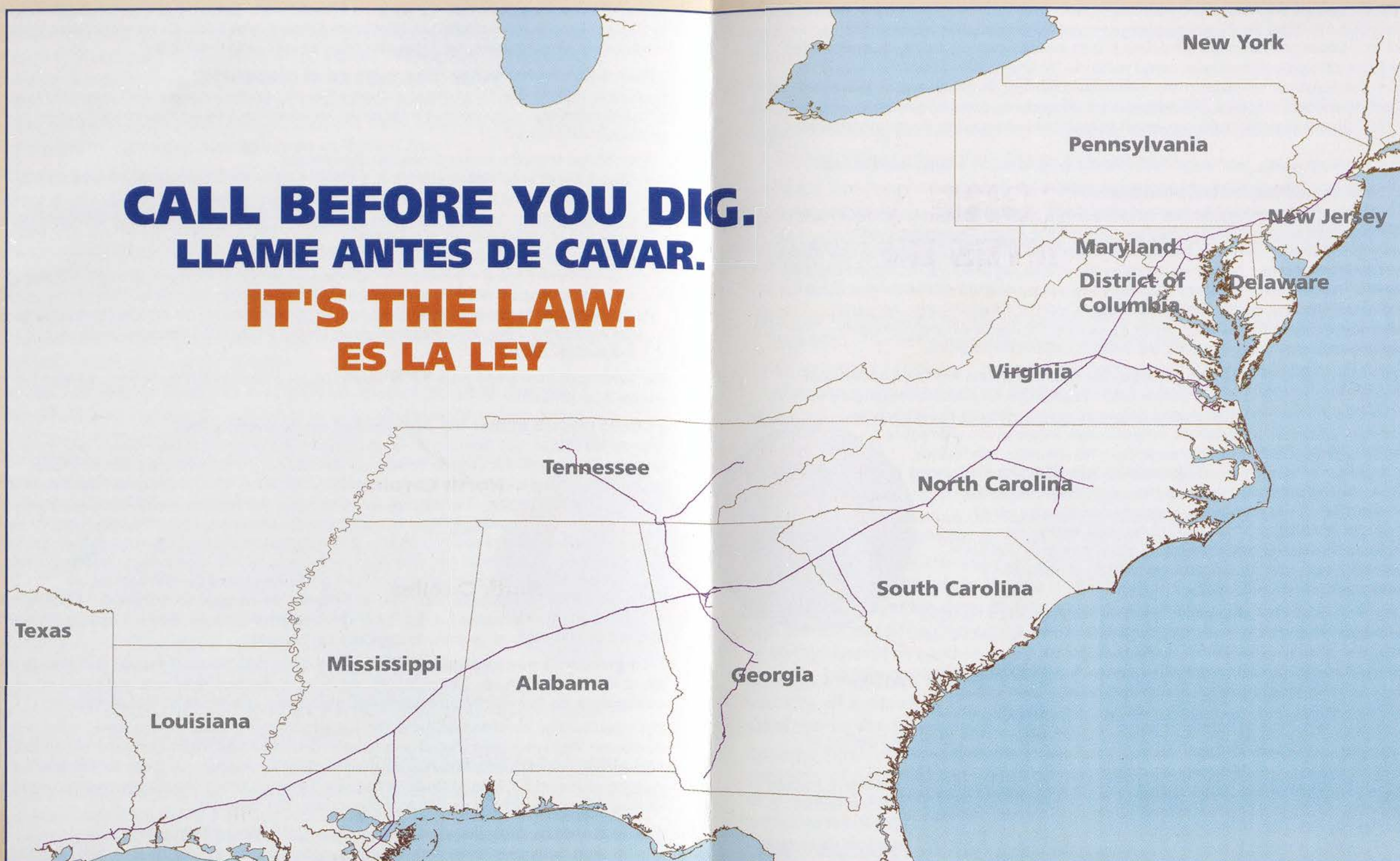
¿Cuándo debo llamar al sistema One-Call (Una-Llamada)?

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Póngase en contacto con su sistema de One-Call (Una-Llamada) por lo menos 72 horas de anticipación antes de cavar. En todos los estados, someterse a los procedimientos del sistema de One-Call (Una-Llamada) es exigido por la ley. Recuerde, incluso un raspado o una abolladura al oleoducto necesita ser informado a la compañía del oleoducto. Si no se repara rápidamente, podría resultar en una fuga futura o en un accidente serio.

Centro de Control: Atlanta, Georgia, teléfono 1-800-926-2728

CALL BEFORE YOU DIG.
LLAME ANTES DE CAVAR.
IT'S THE LAW.
ES LA LEY



STATE ONE-CALL NUMBERS

NUMEROS DE ONE-CALL (UNA-LLAMADA) DEL ESTADO

Excavators and contractors are urged to call one of the following state One-Call numbers:

Se urge a los excavadores y contratistas que se comuniquen a uno de los siguientes números de One-Call del estado:

Alabama
 Delaware
 District of Columbia
 Georgia
 Louisiana
 Maryland
 Mississippi
 New Jersey

1-800-292-8525
 1-800-282-8555
 1-800-257-7777
 1-800-282-7411
 1-800-272-3020
 1-800-257-7777
 1-800-227-6477
 1-800-272-1000

New York
 North Carolina
 Pennsylvania
 South Carolina
 Tennessee
 Texas
 Virginia

1-800-272-4480
 1-800-632-4949
 1-800-242-1776
 1-800-922-0983
 1-800-351-1111
 1-800-344-8377
 1-800-552-7001

Who is Colonial Pipeline?

Colonial Pipeline Company is an interstate common carrier of refined petroleum products throughout the Eastern United States. We provide the essential petroleum products that, as part of America's Energy Lifeline, sustain our nation's industry and our economy as well as our individual households. Colonial Pipeline operates over 5,500 miles of pipeline from Texas to New York harbor, which supply the growing energy needs of Americans.

For more information, please visit our website at www.colpipe.com

Why are petroleum pipelines important?

Pipelines are an essential part of our daily lives. **Comfort** - our homes are heated by the product supplied by pipelines; **Safety and Security** - our military depends upon the fuels carried by pipelines; **Transportation** - our cars are powered by product carried by pipelines... essentially our homes and workplaces are indirectly enhanced and operated by this energy lifeline. Colonial Pipeline plays an essential and safe role in the transportation of petroleum products to meet the energy needs of the United States.

How do I know if there is a pipeline underground nearby?

Yellow, black and red marker signs are located at frequent points along the right of way. (An example of Colonial's warning sign is given on this page.)

These warning signs provide vital information regarding Colonial, product being transported and phone numbers to contact Colonial Pipeline. Pipeline markers appear at all locations where the pipelines cross roads, rivers and streams, railroads and other locations. While pipeline markers are helpful indicators of a pipeline, these markers are used to show approximate location of a pipeline only. Markers do not reveal the exact location or depth of a pipeline.

Information regarding pipelines operating in your community may be obtained by accessing the National Pipeline Mapping System (NPMS) www.npms.rspa.dot.gov/. NPMS can provide a list of pipeline operators and operator contact information in your area.

How do I contact Colonial Pipeline?

If you have any questions, please contact Colonial Pipeline at **678-762-2255**.

Informed residents along our pipeline will help us achieve our goal of "zero spills, zero errors" and continued safe operations within our communities. For information regarding our Integrity Management Program, contact us through our website www.colpipe.com, or at **678-762-2255**.

How do I recognize a leak?

Pipeline accidents are extremely rare. Residents along or in the vicinity of a pipeline need to be able to recognize these:

- **Petroleum product patches** on the ground or a **sheen on water** if near a river, stream or lake.
- Spots of **dead vegetation**.
- **Unusual noises** coming from a pipeline or near a marker. A leak can make a hissing or roaring sound depending on the magnitude of the leak.
- Any **unusual odor**. A liquid petroleum leak will be accompanied by a strong scent. Each liquid petroleum product has its own characteristic odor.

If you suspect a petroleum pipeline leak, contact your local fire department immediately. Local fire departments are aware of pipelines and are trained to secure the area as quickly as possible.

What action do I take if a leak occurs?

In the unlikely event of a pipeline leak, your personal safety is the first priority. Residents should be aware of the following basic actions and precautions:

- Do not make contact with the escaped product.
- Leave the area immediately and alert others in the vicinity, if necessary.
- Avoid creating sparks or sources of heat that could cause the liquid and/or vapors to ignite. Do not light a cigarette, start any engine, use a telephone or even switch on or off an electric light.
- Turn off any running machinery.
- If you happen upon a leak or vapor cloud while in an automobile, do not drive into the area. Proceed cautiously away from the area.
- Once clear of the area, immediately notify your local fire department and the pipeline company. Contact Colonial Pipeline toll-free at **1-800-926-2728**.

Please be prepared to give the location, a description of the leak, your name and a contact number.

How can I help prevent pipeline accidents?

One of the largest causes of pipeline accidents is "third party damage" - someone digging into the pipeline. To help prevent such accidents, states have an excavation notification system known as One-Call. When you call this number, the One-Call center notifies the pipeline company (or other buried utility organization) in the area of the proposed dig. **A complete listing of state One-Call numbers is provided with the Colonial system map in this brochure.** The company will send a local representative to the excavation site to mark the exact location of the buried pipeline or utility.

Always telephone the state One-Call system before digging within the vicinity of a pipeline marker to avoid any potential risks associated with damage to the pipeline.

Colonial Pipeline has achieved success with our Resident Watcher Program to alert the company of potential hazards to the pipeline by having local residents watch the right of way along our pipeline system. Colonial Pipeline has a reward program in place for notification of potential pipeline hazards.

When should I call the One-Call system?

Excavators and homeowners should use the One-Call system before starting any digging project for fences, flagpoles, landscaping, storage buildings, foundations, swimming pools, ground clearing, deep plowing, laying underground pipe or wiring. Take the time to call, whether you dig by hand or use machinery. You could prevent disruption of service, accidents, injuries and possible death - not to mention the delay of your project.

Contact your One-Call system at least 72 hours in advance before digging. In all states, adherence to the One-Call procedure is **required by law**. Remember, even a scrape or a dent to a pipeline needs to be reported to the pipeline company. If not promptly repaired, it could result in a future leak or serious accident.

Control Center: Atlanta, Georgia 1-800-926-2728

¿Quién es Colonial Pipeline?

La Compañía Colonial Pipeline es una empresa de transporte público interestatal de productos de petróleo refinados que atraviesa el este de los Estados Unidos. Proveemos los principales productos petrolíferos que, como parte de "la arteria energética de América", mantienen tanto nuestras industrias como nuestra economía y las necesidades de cada hogar. Colonial Pipeline maneja más de 5,500 millas de tubería que van desde Texas hasta el puerto de Nueva York la cual suministra las crecientes necesidades energéticas de los americanos.

Si desea mayor información, por favor visite nuestra página web: www.colpipe.com

¿Por qué son importantes los oleoductos?

Los oleoductos son parte esencial de nuestra vida diaria. **Comodidad** - la calefacción en nuestros hogares funciona con productos transportados a través de los oleoductos; **Seguridad y Confianza** - nuestras fuerzas armadas dependen del combustible que llevan los oleoductos; **Transporte** - nuestros vehículos dependen del producto transportado por los oleoductos... en resumen, nuestros hogares y lugares de trabajo son indirectamente afectados y funcionan por esta fuente de energía. Colonial Pipeline juega un papel importante y seguro en la transportación de productos derivados del petróleo para satisfacer las necesidades energéticas de los Estados Unidos de América.

¿Cómo puedo saber si hay un oleoducto subterráneo en las cercanías?

Los letreros de color amarillo, negro y rojos están localizados en puntos frecuentes a lo largo del derecho al paso. (En esta página se puede ver un ejemplo del letrero de Colonial.) Estas señales de advertencia proporcionan información vital sobre Colonial, el tipo de producto que se transporta y los números telefónicos de información de Colonial Pipeline. Los letreros que marcan el oleoducto se encuentran en todos los lugares donde éste atraviesa cruces de carreteras, ríos y riachuelos, líneas de ferrocarril y otros lugares. Aunque estos letreros son muy útiles para indicar donde hay un oleoducto, estos letreros se usan solamente para indicar la ubicación aproximada del oleoducto. Los letreros no indican la ubicación y profundidad exacta de un oleoducto.

Información en cuanto a los oleoductos que funcionan en su comunidad se puede obtener conectándose a la página web www.npms.rspa.dot.gov/ del National Pipeline Mapping System (Sistema Nacional de Mapas de Línea de Tubería (NPMS por sus siglas en inglés)). NPMS le puede proveer una lista de funcionarios de oleoductos y la información para contactar al funcionario en su área.

¿Cómo me pongo en contacto con Colonial Pipeline?

Si usted tiene alguna pregunta, por favor póngase en contacto con Colonial Pipeline al **678-762-2255**.

Los residentes informados a lo largo de nuestro oleoducto nos ayudarán a conseguir nuestro objetivo "de cero derrames, cero errores" y un funcionamiento seguro y continuo dentro de nuestras comunidades. Para información acerca de nuestro Integrity Management Program (Programa de Dirección de Integridad), póngase en contacto con nosotros a través de nuestra página Web www.colpipe.com, o al **678-762-2255**.

¿Cómo reconocer una fuga?

Los accidentes del oleoducto son extremadamente raros. Los residentes a lo largo o en las cercanías de un oleoducto deben ser capaces de reconocer estos puntos:

- **Charcos de productos del petróleo** en la tierra o un **brillo sobre el agua** si está cerca de un río, una corriente de agua o un lago.
- Áreas de **vegetación muerta**.
- **Ruidos inusuales** provenientes del oleoducto o cerca de un letrero. Una fuga puede producir sonidos como silbidos o rugidos, según la magnitud de la fuga.
- Cualquier **olor inusual**. Una fuga de petróleo líquido causará un olor muy fuerte. Cada producto de petróleo líquido tiene su propio olor característico. Si usted sospecha que hay una fuga de petróleo en el oleoducto, comuníquese inmediatamente con el departamento local de bomberos. El departamento de bomberos tiene conocimiento de la ubicación de los oleoductos y están entrenados para asegurar las áreas afectadas lo más rápidamente posible.

Si usted sospecha que hay un derrame en el oleoducto, comuníquese con el departamento de bomberos local de inmediato. Los bomberos saben la ubicación de los oleoductos y están entrenados para bloquear las áreas afectadas lo más pronto posible.

¿Qué debo hacer si hay una fuga en el oleoducto?

En el caso improbable que haya una fuga en el oleoducto, su seguridad personal tiene primera prioridad. Los residentes deberían ser consientes de las siguientes acciones y precauciones básicas:

- No tenga contacto con el producto derramado.
- Abandone el área inmediatamente y alerte a otros en las cercanías, si es necesario.
- Evite crear chispas o fuentes de calor que podrían causar que el líquido y/o los vapores se incendien. No prenda un cigarrillo, arranque ningún motor, use un teléfono ni incluso encienda ni apague una luz eléctrica.
- Apague cualquier maquinaria que esté funcionando.
- Si ocurre una fuga o una nube de vapor mientras usted se encuentra en un automóvil, no maneje dentro del área. Proceda cautelosamente alejándose de la zona.
- Una vez alejado del área, notifique a su departamento de bomberos local y a la compañía del oleoducto. Póngase en contacto con Colonial Pipeline llamando gratis al **1-800-926-2728**.

Por favor esté preparado para dar la ubicación, una descripción de la fuga, su nombre y un número de contacto.

¿Cómo puedo evitar los accidentes en el oleoducto?

Una de las causas más grandes de los accidentes son originados por "daños por terceras personas" - alguien excavando en la línea de tubería. Para ayudar a prevenir dichos accidentes, los estados tienen un sistema de notificación de excavaciones conocido como One-Call (Una-Llamada). Cuando usted llama a este número, el centro de operaciones de One-Call (Una-Llamada) notifica a la compañía del oleoducto (o a otra organización que tenga servicios subterráneos) en el área que se propone excavar. La compañía enviará un representante para marcar con exactitud los lugares donde el oleoducto está enterrado. **Una lista completa de los números de One-Call (Una-Llamada) del estado es proporcionada en este folleto con el sistema de mapas de Colonial.** La compañía enviará a un representante local al lugar de la excavación para marcar la ubicación exacta de la línea de tubería o el servicio de utilidades enterrados.

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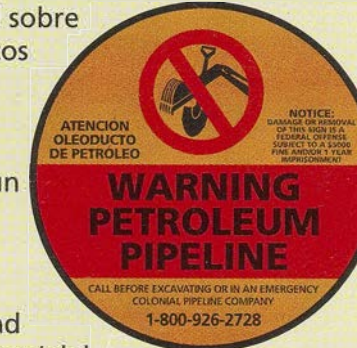
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¿Cuándo debo llamar al sistema One-Call (Una-Llamada)?

Los excavadores y propietarios de viviendas deberían usar el sistema One-Call (Una-Llamada) antes de empezar cualquier proyecto de excavación para cercas, vallas, mástiles de banderas, ajardinamiento, cuartos de almacenaje, fundaciones, piscinas, limpieza de terreno, arar en profundidad o colocar tubería o cables de electricidad subterráneos. Dése tiempo para llamar, ya sea que usted cave a mano o usando maquinaria. Usted podría prevenir la interrupción del servicio, accidentes, heridas y la posibilidad de muerte, sin mencionar el retraso de su proyecto.

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Centro de Control: Atlanta, Georgia, teléfono 1-800-926-2728





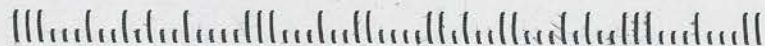
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Edison disaster victims get more assistance

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3/30/94

By DANA YVETTE GEORGE

Community and government aid offers are still pouring in a week after the natural gas explosion near Edison's Durham Woods apartment complex.

State Treasurer Brian W. Clymer announced yesterday a four-month extension of the state income tax filing deadline for victims.

"We will not impose late filing or late penalties against these taxpayers if they file their 1993 New Jersey income tax returns before August 15, 1994," Clymer said.

Taxpayers taking advantage of the deadline extension should write "Edison Disaster" in red ink across the top of their returns when they do file them.

Taxpayers who need assistance should call the state tax hotline at 609-588-2200 or the IRS at 1-800-829-1040.

Other services available include the following:

■ The Wellington Hall Care Center, a nursing home in Hackensack, is collecting clothing for the Edison explosion victims, at the center, 301 Union St.

■ The Community FoodBank of New Jersey has donated 2,000 pounds of disposable diapers, toiletries, and baby food. The agency also is storing a trailer load of frozen soup that J.P. Lipton donated.

"The Salvation Army did not have the freezer space and they turned to us knowing that we had ample space. FoodBank will simply hold the soup, and the Salvation Army will distribute it to Edison residents as needed," said Kathleen DiChiara, executive director of the agency.

■ The Middlesex County Economic Opportunities Corp. is offering temporary emergency child care serv-

ices for children up to school age, as parents search for new housing and work through the details necessary to return their families to normal.

MCEOC is working in conjunction with the federal Agriculture Department to supply family food packages containing 10-day rations.

Victims interested in food packages may call 1-800-439-1876, child care services 846-6600 extension 217, clothing and furniture 324-1580.

■ First Fidelity Bank is offering a special loan and service package to Durham Woods residents.

Unsecured personal loans of up to \$10,000 will be granted at reduced interest rates with the first loan payment not due for three months. A Durham Woods Emergency Loan and Service Center has been established at First Fidelity's Edison branch, 1899 Route 27 and Stony Road West, where applications for these loans will be taken.

Loan decisions will be made within 24 hours of application. Durham Woods residents with existing First Fidelity loans may apply at the Edison branch emergency loan and service center to have their loan payments deferred for 90 days.

First Fidelity also will open new checking accounts for and rent safe deposit boxes to Durham Woods residents with no fees for a year.

The hours of the branch and its emergency center have been extended this week until 8 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, and until 2 p.m. Saturday. The branch opens each day at 9 a.m. The branch's phone number is 985-5177.

Additionally, collection canisters for the Edison Mayor's Relief Fund are being set up at 25 First Fidelity branches in the region, and First Fidelity will match the donations, with the bank committed to a minimum contribution of \$5,000.

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3/25/94 HN

First blast suit already is filed

Industry braces for lots more

By **KENNETH L. GODWIN**
Home News Business Writer

Less than 12 hours after yesterday's blast, Edison lawyer Michael F. Lombardi had received his first client from the most spectacular explosion to rock the area in years.

By 3:45 p.m. yesterday, he had filed a lawsuit with the deputy clerk of the Middlesex County Superior Court on behalf of the Kemps family of Edison.

The Kemps were one of the many families in the Durham Woods apartments displaced by the Wednesday night pipeline explosion. Lombardi said Nancy Kemps, the mother, suffered burns on her leg. Mark Kemps, her husband, was not physically injured, but may have suffered mental anguish. Their 7-year-old son, Scott, may have suffered the most: The autistic boy had to be rushed to the hospital after the explosion, and then to a psychiatrist, to treat his condition.

The lawsuit may have been the first filed in connection with the dramatic pipeline explosion that shook Edison, but it certainly won't be the last.

A total of 128 apartments in the Durham Woods development were leveled by the fire that erupted after the blast. Thousands, if not millions of dollars worth of possessions were destroyed. Many people were left homeless and many were injured.

Texas Eastern Transmission Corp. of Houston, which owns the

pipeline, is sure to feel the worst of the legal venom, as it did in the Kemps' lawsuit, lawyers and industry officials say. Durham Woods Associates, the firm that owns the development, may also be named, as it was in the Kemps' suit.

But, until investigators determine what caused the pipeline to explode, sending an enormous and horrifying fireball into the midnight sky, it is not clear who will have to pay up.

Investigators from the National Transportation Safety Board, along with officials from the federal Department of Transportation and the pipeline company itself, will try to piece together what happened.

Nevertheless, lawyers and industry officials say, most of the lawsuits will allege one or all of five different points of law, almost all of which will be directed against the pipeline owners.

Among possible legal arguments:

■ The gas being fed through the pipe was a product that was defective.

■ Strict liability may be alleged if attorneys contend that transporting gas is an inherently dangerous activity.

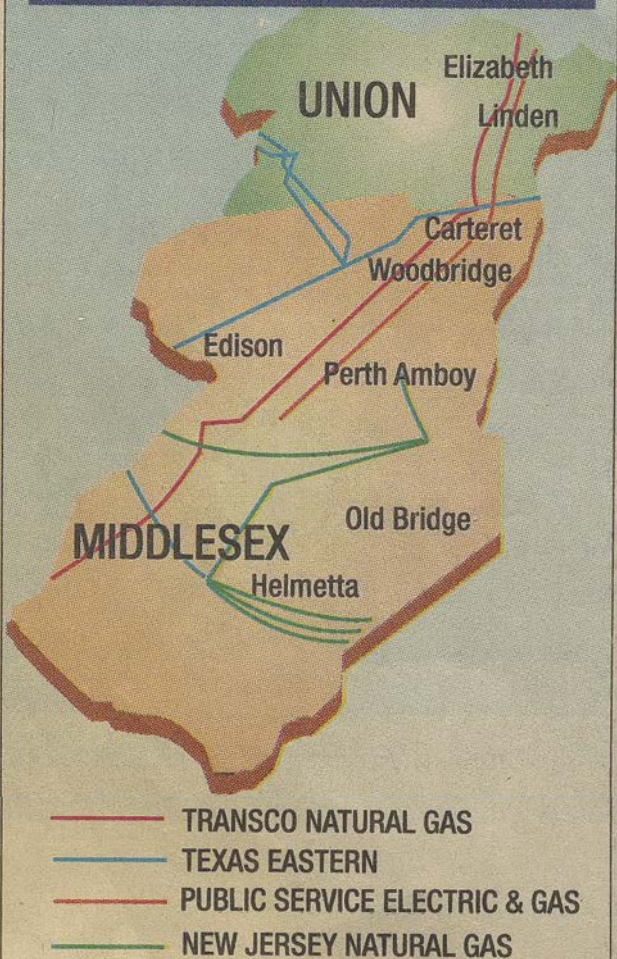
■ Absolute liability, if granted, would force the company to pay damages outright.

■ The pipeline company was grossly negligent, in which case plaintiffs could collect punitive, as well as compensatory, damages.

■ A defendant is so obviously negligent that the burden of proof shifts to the defendant. In a normal negligence case, it is the plaintiff who must prove that the defendant was negligent.

GAS PIPE NETWORK

Explosion, Edison



3/25/94 NT

1st suit over blast filed

By CAROLE THOMPSON

Staff Writer

NT 3/25/94

Twelve hours after firemen extinguished a roaring inferno that engulfed eight buildings and caused the evacuation of 1,500 people, the first lawsuit was filed.

Attorney Michael Lombardi of the law firm Lombardi and Lombardi in Edison filed a Complaint and Jury Demand in Elizabeth Superior Court at 3:45 p.m. on behalf of Nancy, Mark, and Scott Kemps, a family whose apartment building was burned to the ground.

Lombardi will request that the suit be certified as a class action.

"If I'm not the first, I must be one of the first," Lombardi said yesterday.

Nancy Kemps was burned on the leg; her son, Scott, 8, who is autistic, was emotionally distressed by the ordeal, and Mark Kemps was burned on the face, said Sam Gettis, Nancy Kemps' father.

"They escaped in their pajamas, that's all they have left, everything

else is destroyed," Gettis said.

Lombardi said he was called this morning shortly before 9 a.m. by the Kemps who lived in building 12 of the Durham Woods apartment complex. He said he acted swiftly to file the lawsuit because he wants to protect the Kemps' interest.

"I don't know how much insurance [the defendants] have," he said. "If they have limited coverage, it may be first come, first served, and I want to make sure [the Kempses] have some kind of priority. It's one of the factors the court considers."

The suit names Texas Eastern Co., which owns the pipeline that exploded, and Durham Woods Associates, which owns the apartment complex.

Melvyn I. Weiss, senior and founding partner of the New York City law firm Milberg Weiss Bershad Hynes & Lerach, said the advantage of being one of the first to file in a class action lawsuit is that an attorney stands a very good chance of getting to represent all the others — which sometimes may number in the hundreds —

and getting a percentage of everybody's award.

"Nothing wrong with that," Weiss said. "If I were a client I'd want somebody who wanted to get rich to represent me. He'd have incentive."

And he'd have to have a pretty huge bank account to begin with.

Ordinarily, class action suits can drag on for as long as 10 years, and during that time attorneys don't get a cent, said Weiss, who was lead counsel in the Washington Public Power Supply System litigation that recovered \$800 million, and for insurance policy buyers who recovered \$750 million from Michael Milken and Drexel Burnham. He also represents fishermen in the Exxon Valdez litigation.

Weiss said getting there first does not automatically guarantee that the attorney will be awarded the entire class action suit. Other attorneys contacted by others, might petition to be considered.

And generally, attorneys work in teams, Weiss said.

Settlement ends Edison gas blast case

Question of ultimate blame remains unresolved for residents

By Jim O'Neill
STAR-LEDGER STAFF

An out-of-court agreement reached last night put an end to a nearly five-year battle over who was responsible for a spectacular natural gas pipeline explosion that caused millions of dollars in damage and

routed 1,500 tenants from an Edison apartment complex.

Texas Eastern Transmission Corp., owners of the pipeline, and its parent company, Duke Energy of Houston, reached the settlement in New Brunswick with five current and past owners of an asphalt manufacturing company that had been

ground zero for the explosion just 300 feet from the sprawling Durham Woods apartment complex.

Texas Eastern, which previously paid \$65 million to settle 2,200 lawsuits brought by tenants and others living near the blast site, had been preparing to go to court next week for a trial to recover some of the money from the asphalt company

owners.

John LaVecchia, a Roseland attorney representing Texas Eastern, said lawyers agreed not to discuss the terms of the settlement, leaving it unclear how much the company expects to collect from the asphalt company owners, who had been named as co-defendants in the litigation.

"We were able to reach a resolution and we're pleased about that,"

the attorney said.

The settlement, reached after three days of intensive negotiations conducted by Superior Court Judge Marina Corodemus in New Brunswick, also leaves unclear whether residents will ever learn who was ultimately responsible for the blast.

"Now I'll never know what happened," said Mary Ann Williams, a former tenant who vividly recalls the

PLEASE SEE DURHAM, PAGE 10

Durham

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

Settlement ends gas blast battle

orange glow that engulfed her apartment.

It was just before midnight on March 23, 1994, when nighttime turned to day outside the Durham Woods complex.

The natural gas pipeline ruptured, shooting a bright orange fireball so high into the night sky it was visible in three states. The huge blast destroyed eight apartment buildings, sent people running for their lives through a rain of baseball-size stones, pieces of wood and metal, gravel and glass, and other debris that was found as far as five miles away.

The explosion injured 100 people and contributed to the death of a woman who went outside her home near the blast site.

Since the explosion, the eight destroyed apartment buildings off Route 287 and New Durham Road have been rebuilt.

As the fifth anniversary approaches, some tenants have anxiously awaited a civil trial that would have determined if any of six companies were responsible for causing the explosion. Tenants hoping to learn whether anyone would be found culpable for the blast expressed disappointment that there would be no trial.

"It will always bother me," Williams, the former tenant, said last night. "I don't think I will ever have any closure not knowing who was responsible."

Paul Garelick, an Edison attorney who helped negotiate tenants' settlements, said the tenants should take comfort now that the case is closed.

"They can have a feeling of closure, since the defendants did own up to their responsibilities" by reaching that settlement, Garelick said.

The cause of the blast had been a key issue from the moment of the explosion.

Following lengthy examination of the blast site, investigators from the National Transportation Safety Board and state and Middlesex County officials discovered gouge marks in what remained of the underground pipeline. They concluded that excavation some years before the blast had caused a crack that grew until the brittle steel pipe ripped open.

Authorities found debris, including office equipment and a stolen pickup truck, among items buried around the pipeline. Additionally, investigators determined that freshwater ponds used to store sediments from the asphalt manufacturing process were constructed above the

pipeline and had been dredged on a number of occasions.

But neither the National Transportation Safety Board nor a subsequent investigation by a state grand jury were able to pin responsibility for the illegal digging.

Court papers offered legal arguments in which Texas Eastern contended gouges found in the pipeline occurred sometime after it last was inspected by the company in 1986.

The current owner of the asphalt plant, Quality Materials Inc., claimed it was not responsible, asserting any damage to the pipeline occurred before it purchased the property in 1984.

Haskell Excavation Corp., which owned the plant before Quality, also denied responsibility, asserting the damage happened after it sold the plant. The first owner, Halecrest Construction Corp., argued the pipeline gouges must have been caused by someone else.

Was cold winter a factor?

By MARTHA MCKAY

Staff Writer

NT 3/25/94

While the exact cause of Wednesday's fiery explosion is likely to take months to determine, experts as well as politicians yesterday speculated that this past winter's weather may be to blame.

"We did have a bad winter and we have to look at how the freezing and thawing, and the rising water table was coupled with corrosion that may have been accelerated by winter conditions like the salt on roads," said Burton Davidson, an engineering professor and chairman of the Department of Chemical and Biotechnical Engineering at Rutgers University.

Governor Whitman, visiting the site of

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Blasts often caused by third parties, corrosion

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the inferno yesterday, said: "There's all sorts of speculation — the severe cold, followed by the warm weather of the last few days."

But other officials say they doubt that weather played a role in the explosion which left one woman dead and hundreds homeless after it leveled part of the Durham Woods apartment complex early Wednesday morning.

"We can't rule it out, but our people are saying it had nothing to do with the weather," said Patricia Klinger, a spokeswoman for the Office of Pipeline Safety (OPS) — the federal department that oversees the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of gas pipelines used to transmit the gas to distribution points.

The steel pipeline in the area of Wednesday's explosion was buried seven feet underground, below the frostline, said Klinger.

Officials at Texas Eastern Transmission — a subsidiary of Panhandle Eastern Corp. of Houston, Texas — which owns and operates the main, said yesterday that their Houston control room registered a "rapid" drop in gas pressure in the section of pipeline where it exploded which caused them to immediately dispatch local operators to shut off the nearest valves.

The drop in gas pressure indicated "a possible breach" in the pipeline, Texas Eastern officials said.

Two valves located nine miles apart at Talmadge Road and

Route 1 were then shut off on either side of the blast location, officials said, but the exact time of the computer reading and the time the valves were closed were not available last night.

"It took some time for the fire to burn down," said Texas Eastern spokesman Guy Cantwell, who added that there still was a substantial amount of gas in the nine miles of pipeline between the two valves.

The gas was diverted into two 20-inch lines that run parallel to the line that ruptured, he said.

Experts say the most common reason for pipeline accidents is "third party damage" to the line, such as a backhoe or other type of digging equipment, which accidentally ruptures the pipe and allows the gas to escape.

The second most common cause of accidents is external corrosion of the pipe, followed by internal corrosion, and then construction material defects, said Klinger.

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From 1983 to 1992, there were 1,403 accidents along the 250,000 miles of transmission pipelines in the United States, according to OPS figures.

Of those accidents, 50 resulted in deaths and 185 in injuries — which industry experts call a relatively good safety record.

OPS found that of the 75 accidents occurring in 1992, 30 were caused by third party damage, seven by internal corrosion, seven by defective construction material, six by external corrosion, and 25 are still under investigation.

Figures for New Jersey were not available yesterday.

The exact cause of Wednesday's blast may take months to determine because the fire may have damaged important clues that a metals expert needs to examine, said Klinger.

The experts do appear to agree on one thing: the cause of every natural gas explosion is the same.

"It's a simple science," said Consolidated Edison's Marty Gitten.

The same thing that happened Wednesday "happens when you light your stove," he added.

Oxygen combines with natural gas in a certain ratio and some source of electricity — either a spark, a pilot light, or in some cases, static electricity — ignites the mix.

In the case of a pipeline rupture, the gas rushing out often causes enough movement of the pipe's broken pieces to create a spark which in turn causes an explosion.

The nation's transmission pipelines are regulated by OPS, but inspections and maintenance are carried out by the pipeline owners and then checked by OPS, said Klinger.

Pipes that transmit gas to distribution sites, which companies such as Public Service Electric and Gas own, must be buried a minimum of three feet below ground, but the pipe's thickness depends on when it was built, said Klinger.

Pipelines installed prior to the Pipeline Safety Act of 1968 were governed by an industry-standard only, said Klinger.

The Texas Eastern pipeline was installed in 1961.

The location of pipelines is determined by the Federal Energy

Regulatory Commission, as well as state and local zoning laws, said Klinger.

In general, a series of maintenance techniques are used, including aerial inspections by plane which are used to spot construction near — or — on top of the pipeline, as well as signs of dying vegetation which may indicate a leak, said Klinger.

In addition, electronically controlled devices, called "smart pigs," are used inside the pipes to record any structural problems.

Pipelines also are often coated inside with a metal that will corrode faster than the steel pipe itself — and a device is then used which can measure anomalies in the coating by passing an electric current along it, said Klinger.

According to Klinger, as well as

officials at Panhandle Eastern, the company uses all of the safety techniques described.

"The transmission of natural gas is very safe," said Julie Stewart, a spokeswoman for American Gas Association, an industry organization based in Arlington, Va.

But Rutgers Professor Davidson disagreed.

"The industry needs better inspection, better quality control and better installation," said Davidson.

He said he would like to see a 1,000-foot buffer zone on either side of major transmission lines within which people may not live or work.

The industry's safety record, he said, was relative.

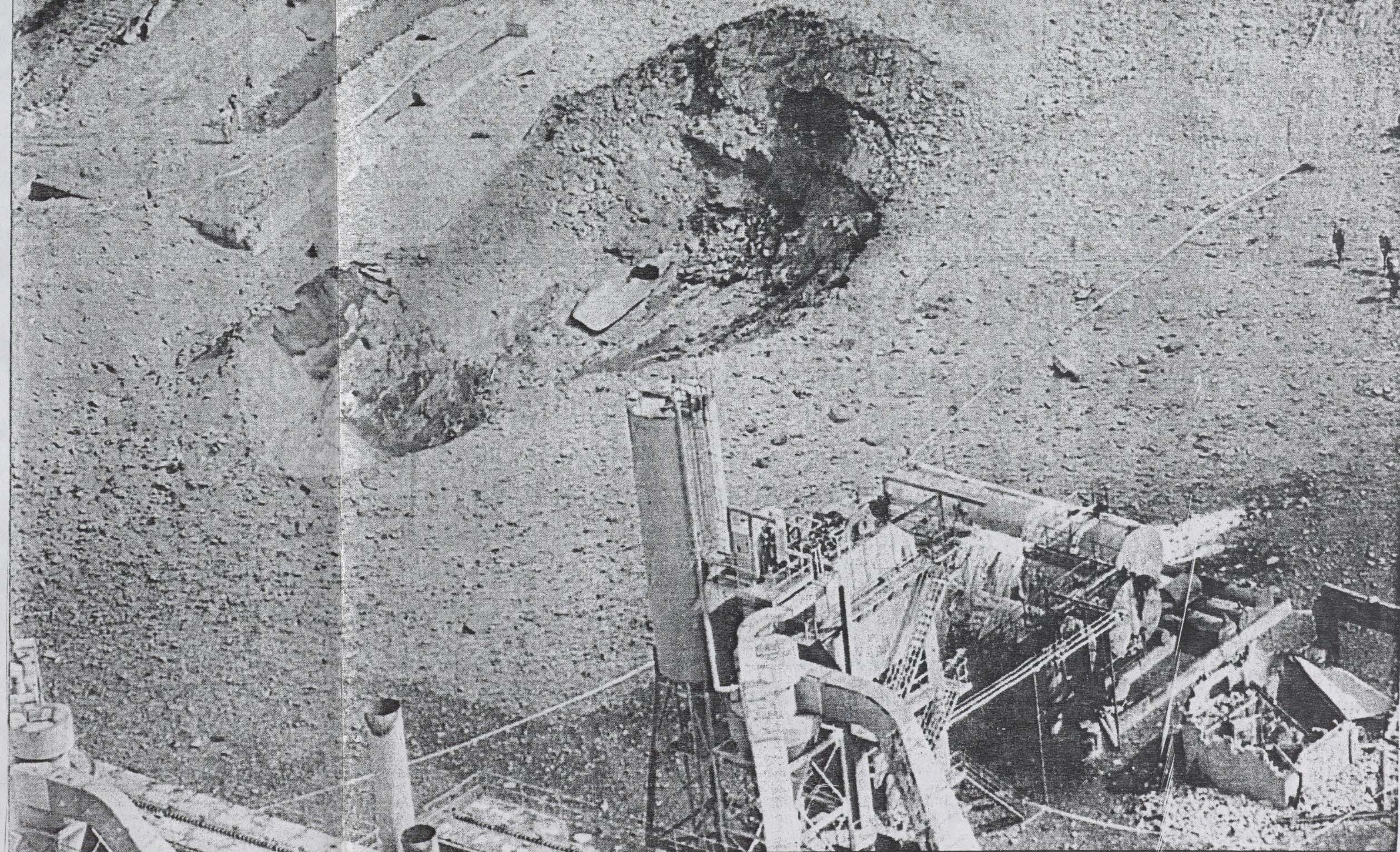
"Twenty-four of the space shuttle missions were a success, but on the 25th mission seven people died," said Davidson.

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MARC ASCHER/The Home New

The ruptured natural gas line appears at the center of the crater created by the blast. An asphalt plant is in the foreground.

Many pipes underground, many fears above

By DAVID M. LEVITT

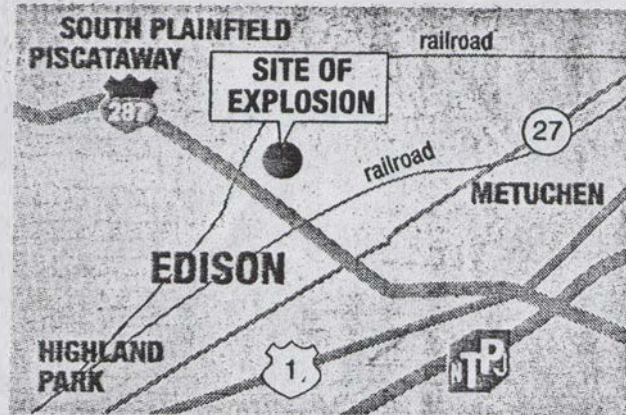
Staff Writer

NT 3/25/94

EDISON Until yesterday, hardly anyone gave a second thought to the miles of gas transmission lines that cross Central Jersey. In fact, Edison Mayor George A. Spadaro said yesterday he never thought about them.

Now it's just about all anyone in Central Jersey — and much of the nation — can think about.

Wednesday night at 11:58, a titanic blast tore through a link of Texas Eastern's 36-inch gas main that sits seven feet below the ground, across the railroad tracks from the 1,000-unit Durham Woods apartment complex. A whoosh of rushing gas filled the resulting 150-foot-long football-shaped crater, creating a fireball that obliterated eight apartment buildings, where approximately 250



JEFFERY COHEN

people lived.

The roaring 500-foot tower of flame lit up the night sky in three states. The inferno could be seen as far away as Kutztown, Pa.

Now an unidentified 32-year-old woman is dead and about 35 more remain

unaccounted for. The 250 people were homeless, an additional 1,500 or so were temporarily displaced, about 200 cars were incinerated, and the fire site was left smoldering like a volcano.

And no one around here will ever look at natural gas lines with the same complacency again.

"I don't understand how a pipeline like that could just explode, with no warning, no nothing," said Spadaro, who estimated the damage at \$5 million in buildings alone.

But he said he planned to find out, not only for his own town's safety, but for everyone else's as well.

Half a nation away, at the precise moment the line ruptured, in a Houston control room a company official likened to NASA's Mission Control, someone's computer screen recorded a sudden, precipitous drop in pressure in Texas Eastern's northeast pipeline, somewhere between Lambertville and Linden.

The drop in gas pressure indicated "a possible breach" in the pipeline, Texas Eastern officials said.

Nothing previous to that moment, insisted George Mazanec, vice board chairman of Texas Eastern's parent company, Panhandle Eastern, indicated that anything unusual was about to happen.

No one yesterday could pinpoint a cause for the blast. But Spadaro called the company "a likely candidate for a responsible party."

The only similar accident in company history happened in 1985 in Kentucky, Mazanec said, and almost a decade later, "we still don't know why [it happened]. The line just gave way."

Reporters peppered the haggard-looking Panhandle official with questions: Why hadn't the pipeline been inspected since 1986? Why weren't federal regulations sufficient to prevent this type of disaster? Shouldn't the regulations be reviewed and changed? What assurances can you give the people who live near the company's 25,000 miles of pipeline across the country that they won't be victims of the next blast?

Mazanec tried to assure the reporters that such blasts are very rare, and that his company constantly monitors its pipelines electronically and that he welcomes official scrutiny.

What makes this blast especially mysterious, he said, was that there was no reported construction in the area: When a line ruptures, it's usually because some backhoe or bulldozer ran over it.

Investigating teams from the National Transportation Safety Board, other federal and state agencies, and the pipeline owner, Texas Eastern Transmission Corp., spent the day checking the scene.

John Lauber, NTSB member, said at a news conference last night that the investigation would be difficult because the 50-foot-deep crater created by the blast had extremely steep walls and was unstable. He said investigators hoped to be able to safely climb into the hole today.

Lauber said there could be many possible causes for the explosion, including corrosion and maintenance problems.

When asked about Texas Eastern's admission in 1987 that it had dumped carcinogenic PCBs and other toxic substances into pits along a pipeline that stretches from Texas to New Jersey, Lauber would only say he was bringing in metallurgists to search the area.

Lauber also said his agency would review previous Texas Eastern incidents, including three pipeline explosions in 1984-1986, one in Louisiana and two in Kentucky that killed a total of 10 people. The Kentucky State Fire Marshal's office attributed the Kentucky explosion that killed five people to corrosion.

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Many pipes underground, fears above

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The mega-blast left another unanswered question: Why, with an explosion this massive, one that threw man-sized boulders hundreds of feet while scores of people were fleeing on foot, with searing heat that melted steel, was the loss of life apparently so minimal? Or was it because the destruction was so complete that the missing simply vaporized?

Officials said 32 people, including three firefighters, were injured, none of them seriously.

But while Spadaro described himself as "cautiously optimistic" that with the single exception, all lives were saved, a dozen or so Army cadaver dogs were sniffing through the blown-apart brick and rubble.

Governor Whitman said the K-9 units found human scent three times yesterday. Twice the dogs' noses turned up freshly slept-in

mattresses; the third find was a dead cat, the governor said.

Tenants and authorities alike credited a window of time between the shock and the fireball — some said it may have been as long as 15 minutes — with giving them enough time to shock them out of bed and out the door, fleeing as an advancing wall of flame seemed to chase them down the streets.

"When you walk in there and see all the cars melted away, you cannot believe that there weren't any people killed," said Middlesex County Freeholder Charles H. Garrod Jr., just minutes after surveying the destruction. "That explosion was in fact a horrible warning. It scared people enough to get them to leave their buildings. Without that, it would have been a horrible incineration. Thank God for that explosion!"

George Ivey, 53, of Building 21 said he was in bed when he heard "what sounded like a hurricane. I tell you it was some kind of noise."

He had enough time to jump into a pair of jeans, grab a jacket — it turned out to be his girlfriend's — from a closet, and begin knocking on doors to alert his fellow tenants. Then, he said, he heard an authoritative voice "tell us to get out, because the whole place might explode."

He and his girlfriend ran a mile to New Durham Road, to the Red Roof Inn, where he called his brother in Union, who came and picked him up. He would later find out that Building 21, as well as Buildings 9, 10, 11, 12, 20, 22, and 24, was reduced to a pile of ash.

In nine years of living there — he was among the first tenants to move in — Ivey said he never even knew there was a major gas pipeline a few hundred feet from his door.

Whitman, who broke off her Florida vacation and, clad in sport clothes and sneakers, toured the explosion site, said there was "no reason [for New Jerseyans] to be fearful or panicky" about living near gas mains.

"This is an extraordinary occurrence," said Whitman, a former chairwoman of the state Board of Regulatory Commissioners, which oversees utility operations in New Jersey. "There is constant testing of these lines that goes on. Ordinarily, these lines are very safe."

Nevertheless, she said she has acceded to Spadaro's demand that the board conduct an independent investigation parallel to the probes now under way by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Office of

Pipeline Safety, the National Transportation Safety Board, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the state Department of Environmental Protection and Energy, and the state Department of Community Affairs, as well as the Edison police and the Middlesex County Arson Task Force.

Despite what Spadaro called a "panic evacuation" — with hundreds of residents trying to get out at the same time fire trucks and other emergency vehicles were trying to get in — everyone somehow made it out OK. Spadaro and Whitman credited the county's emergency management team and the coordinated efforts of dozens of police, fire, and ambulance crews from throughout the county and beyond.

Edison Fire Capt. David Davis, who coordinated the multitown firefighting effort, said that when he arrived on one of the first trucks, there were actually two gigantic fires: the one that was consuming

the eight apartment buildings, and the massive wall of flame emerging from the ruptured main. "We could feel the heat a mile away," he said.

Edison police originally established a command post at the corner of Talmadge Road and New Durham Road, but were forced to move about a half mile farther from the scene because of the searing heat.

Edison firefighter Robert Walsh, who was among the first on the scene, said: "The heat was so intense it was like being in hell. Lights were melting off the trucks. It was just unbearable."

In 20 years of firefighting, Davis said he'd never seen anything like it. "This is a once-in-a-career job," he said. "People were running in pajamas, bathrobes, with bare feet."

"I've never been scared going to a fire before," said Edison firefighter Steven Bardecker.

Firefighters concentrated on evacuating people and wetting down those buildings that hadn't caught fire. "A fire of this magnitude spreads by radiant heat," Davis said. "If you spray water on the buildings, they don't get hot enough to ignite."

For about three hours, that was all they could do, he said. The heat was so intense that firefighters could not get within 1,000 feet of the blast site.

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Shortly after 2 a.m., officials were extremely concerned that a 2,000-gallon fuel oil tank at the

adjacent Quality Materials Inc. asphalt plant could explode and add to the maelstrom. Both the tank and the plant escaped major damage, officials said.

Only when Texas Eastern managed to shut off the gas source, by closing valves located where the line traverses Talmadge Road, and Route 1, could the firefighters turn their attention to the main blaze, Davis said.

Once the valves were closed, the flames gradually came down to a manageable size, while residual gas in the pipeline burned off.

By 8 a.m., rocks large and small that covered the ground, and rubble from the destroyed buildings, were still warm to the touch.

Metal swing sets and slides from the complex's playground were warped from the heat. A tennis court was virtually unrecognizable, with only two blackened poles providing a clue.

Scores of scorched cars, with bumpers and seats melted and windows shattered, dotted the site. The cars closest to the explosion site were almost unrecognizable, with tires reduced to threads, headlights obliterated, and paint seared from their bodies.

Besides the eight destroyed buildings, six or eight structures were damaged by fire.

The 36-inch main, made of welded carbon steel, was laid in 1961, buried 7 feet underground. It runs from the Gulf of Mexico off Louisiana to Boston, delivering natural gas to roughly 20 million customers throughout the Northeast, including the Public Service Electric and Gas Co. of Newark. Because the company has two backup lines, Mazerac said, there was no disruption of service yesterday.

PSE&G spokesmen said they expect no problems supplying customers.

PSE&G counts Texas Eastern Transmission, a subsidiary of Panhandle Eastern, as its second largest supplier, said Neil Brown, PSE&G's spokesman.

Elizabethtown Gas Co. spokesman Ronald Reisman said that the utility buys about one-fifth of its gas supply from Texas Eastern, but he anticipated no disruption in service.

Residents might have noticed a drop in water pressure yesterday morning as a result of the explosion, but other utility services remained intact, officials said.

As of last night, Edison police believed New Durham Road, between Talmadge Road and Route 287, would stay be closed this morning.

Police could not say if any other road would be closed. They still advised motorists to stay away from the blast area if possible.

The explosive rupture left a gash in the earth 120 feet long by 60 feet wide by 50 feet deep. Pieces of the pipeline, reduced to shrapnel, were blasted over a wide area.

More than 150 displaced residents spent the night at Edison High School, where a shelter was set up. Red Cross workers went from table to table in the cafeteria trying to register evacuees.

Informal shelters were also set at the St. Francis CYO building in Metuchen, Metuchen High School, and the Jewish Community Center in Edison. Eventually, the shelters were consolidated at Edison High School, which canceled classes for the day.

Debra Claybrook of Building 12 sat on the curb at the command center at about 1 a.m. as first aid squad members attended to the burned soles of her husband's bare feet.

She and her husband and 8-year-old daughter were asleep when the explosion occurred. "Our ceiling started falling and glass was breaking. ... The ground was so hot, it burned our feet," Claybrook said. "We prayed a lot and cried."

Mildred Warshawski, whose apartment building was one of those consumed by the flames, had to jump from a second-floor balcony to escape.

"We were in bed and all of a sudden we heard a strong rushing sound and saw light coming in. We thought it was a tornado," said Warshawski, who was clad in a nightgown and terry cloth robe.

"We went to open our front door but it was all black so we went out the second-floor balcony and had to jump down, with help from others. As soon as we left our apartment, it was in flames," she said. "We got out just in time."

Another resident, Kim Kostecki, said she was "waiting to die" as she ran from her home.

Steve Mennona, who was visiting a friend in Building 24, said: "Everything was shaking. ... The roof started melting and we decided to run. We ran down the stairs and kept running. Our backs [felt as if they] were burning. We

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kept going as fast as we could.

"When we got far enough away, we turned around and all we could see was a high, white-hot ball. Paint was peeling off cars, windows were exploding. We thought it was a nuclear bomb. We thought someone had blitzed us and we were gone," Mennona said.

Panhandle Eastern is paying for hotel rooms for displaced Durham Woods tenants, and Mazerac said the company offered payments for lost belongings.

Whitman said the state would free up whatever funds it could to help Edison cope with the disaster, and she said she might declare the fire site a state disaster area, if it would free up federal disaster aid.

The principal investor in the Durham Woods project is Erwin Fisch. A call to Fisch yesterday was referred to Harold G. Smith of the Woodbridge law firm Wilentz, Goldman & Spitzer.

In a prepared statement, Smith said: "Durham Woods is shocked and saddened by the tragic gas pipeline explosion. ... We are cooperating fully with all rescue efforts.

"At the present time, we are concentrating our efforts towards assisting our displaced tenants by attempting to find alternative housing for each family," the statement added.

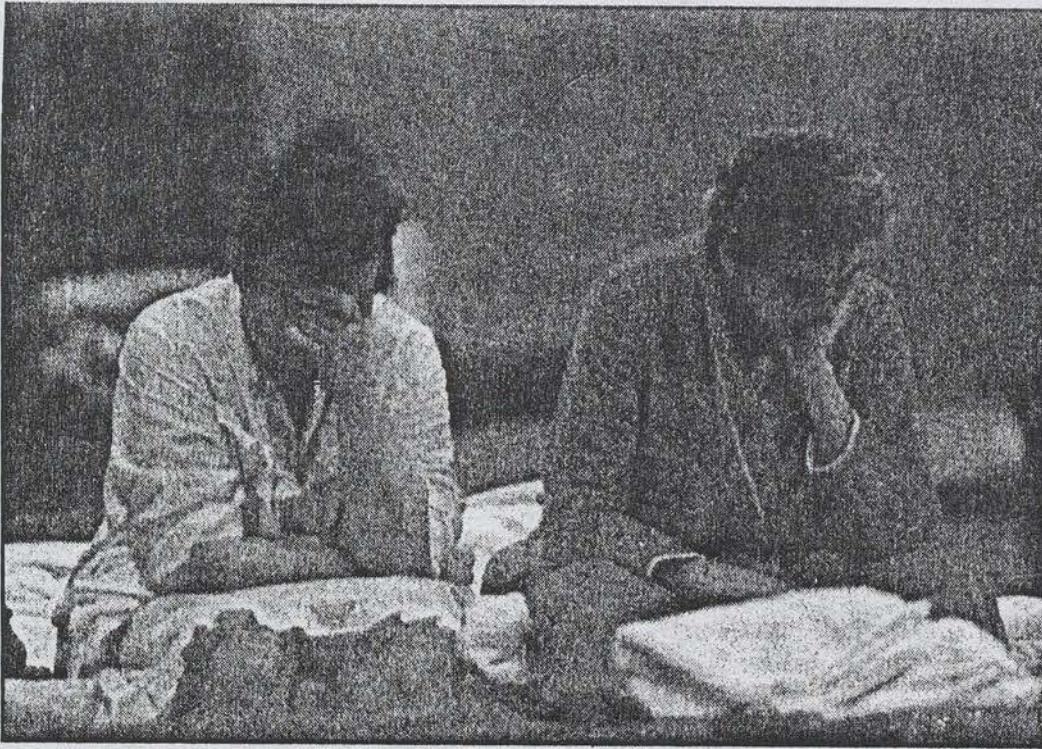
Meanwhile, Rep. Frank J. Pallone Jr., D-N.J., wants to declare Durham Woods a disaster area, which would free up federal funds for those families whose homes disintegrated in the blast.

Pallone, along with U.S. Sens. Bill Bradley and Frank R. Lautenberg — both New Jersey Democrats — have written to the federal Small Business Administration requesting the assistance.

Staff Writers Jim Krane, Rick Malwitz, Josh Rolnick, and Wayne Yourstone contributed to this report.

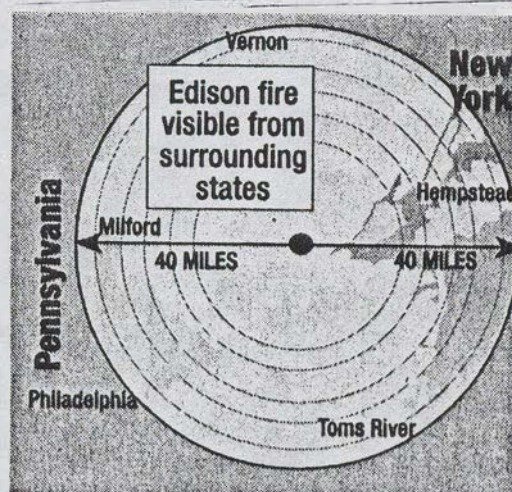
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JOHN FEI/Special to The News Tribune

Teresa Urbanski, left, and daughter-in-law Dana Urbanski at the Edison shelter early Thursday. The Urbanskis lost everything in the disaster.



JEFFERY COHEN

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NOAH K. MURRAY/Special to The Home Ne

Survivors of yesterday's gas line explosion near Durham Woods apartments in Edison talk over their experience at the American Red Cross evacuation center at Edison High School.

Survivors may be slow to sense trauma

Symptoms may appear months later

By SUNITA BODDU
Home News Staff Writer
HN 3/25/94

EDISON — Mental-health experts warn that survivors of yesterday's huge natural-gas explosion may not begin to feel its psychological impact for days or even months after the incident.

Crisis counseling teams from UMDNJ-Community Mental Health Center in Piscataway and South Amboy Memorial Hospital met yesterday with victims of the Durham Woods apartment complex explosion and will be stationed at Edison High School today.

Some survivors may need to seek additional counseling after the immediate trauma subsides, experts agreed.

Trudy Marks, administrative director at the Center for Behavioral Medicine at South Amboy Memorial Hospital, said survivors may at first experience intense symptoms of loss and shock and, more gradually, irritability, stomach ailments and depression.

"If you can imagine that a 3-year-old woman died of a heart attack, you can understand the extreme physical stress that the victims were under," Marks said.

Jerry Roehnelt, division director



THOMAS P. COSTELLO/Special to The Home News

Gov. Whitman and Durham Woods evacuee Maria Garcia share a moment at the Red Cross shelter at Edison High School yesterday. Garcia's son Eduardo is at right.

for psychological emergency services at South Amboy Memorial Hospital, said that some victims may experience post-traumatic stress syndrome, a psychological disorder commonly found in mili-

tary personnel who have served in war zones. The disorder, marked by anxiety attacks and disorientation, may become apparent days or even months after a traumatic incident.

"Someone may put the whole thing behind them and get their life together, until one day when it hits them and the depression and other symptoms will set in," Marks said.

"If you can imagine that a 33-year-old woman died of a heart attack, you can understand the extreme physical stress that the victims were under."

TRUDY MARKS

South Amboy Memorial
Hospital

Clinical experts advised parents to look out for the youngest survivors of the tragedy: their children.

"Parents should be particularly alert for changes in their children," said Dr. Lucille Carr-Kaffashan, acting chief operating officer of UMDNJ-Community Mental Health Center in Piscataway. "They may not be able to verbalize their feelings but will show their distress through behavioral or physical symptoms."

Crisis counselors are holding individual sessions with residents today. In addition, residents seeking assistance for themselves, family or friends can call UMDNJ's 24-hour mental-health line at 908-235-5700, or the South Amboy Memorial Hospital crisis line at 908-727-5222.

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Most injured treated and released

By **CHRISTINA JOHNSON**
Staff Writer

So panicked was Debbie Eckenrode, 26, fleeing the explosion at the Durham Woods Apartment Complex yesterday that she leaped barefoot down several steps at once.

Her ankle fractured or perhaps broken, she waited glumly yesterday afternoon for X-ray results with her companion Ivan Rosa, 27, at John F. Kennedy Medical Center in Edison.

"We were going to go to a dance party in New York, at the Paramount tonight," she said.

Eckenrode, who also missed work yesterday as a hair stylist in South Plainfield, was one of 109 people treated for burns, lacerations, abrasions, and smoke inhalation in local hospitals.

One woman died. A JFK Hospital spokesman said the woman, 32, an Edison resident, and suffered

cardiac arrest at 1:32 a.m. yesterday. The woman's family has requested her name not be released.

Most of the injured were taken to JFK Medical Center in Edison, where officials said 98 patients had been treated and released. Two were admitted.

Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center in Plainfield reported treating seven people.

And at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick, three Edison firefighters and one woman were treated for smoke inhalation.

Rita White, 71, escaped from the dangerous fireball outside her window with a severe headache, pain in her arm, and frazzled nerves. Yesterday, sipping coffee and clutching tissues, she talked about the hellish eruption at the Durham Woods complex with her husband, Sidney, in a JFK waiting room.

Rita White said she was laying

in bed, watching Jay Leno on television. Her husband was tinkering with a vacuum cleaner in the kitchen.

"All of a sudden my bed was shaking. It was shaking like this," she said, rocking in her chair like it was a raft on choppy sea.

She slipped on shoes and a raincoat, and with her husband ran down the stairs to their car, leaving her purse behind and the front door unlocked.

At her daughter's home in Old Bridge, she slept badly. "All night I had a bad headache and pain in my heart going down my arms," she said.

In the morning, the couple checked in at Edison High School. From there, she was sent by ambulance to JFK Medical Center where her blood pressure was monitored.

"It was the nerves," said Sidney White, echoing what the doctors told them. "It was the stress."

Different kind of team spirit

Coaches, athletes heed call for help

By GREG TUFARO
Home News Staff Writer
HN 3/25/94

EDISON — Ken Pagach stood outside the Edison High School entrance, arms flailing and lips moving frantically, a familiar picture of the veteran wrestling coach.

Only yesterday, Pagach wasn't guiding some grappler on the wrestling mat, but directing hundreds of people in and out of the school parking lot.

Most of them were concerned friends or family members of Durham Woods residents.

They were trying to enter the school, which had been transformed into a Red Cross shelter, to make sure their loved ones were not injured in Wednesday night's explosion near the apartment complex.

One young girl, after checking the register and searching the building for a friend, stood by Pagach's side for hours as she waited to see a familiar face.

"She stayed by the gate the whole time," said Pagach. "I didn't know what to say to her. You don't know how to delicately talk to someone about that. You just kind of suffer with them in silence and hope everything turns out all right."

Pagach left the school around 4 p.m. The girl's friend still hadn't arrived.

"I will be thinking about her tonight," he said.

Pagach was one of several Edison coaches and student-athletes who volunteered to help ease the tension and alleviate some of the pain Durham Woods residents were feeling in the aftermath of an explosion that leveled eight buildings in their complex.

Among the residents inside the shelter was All-State lineman Rasheed Simmons, who lives in Durham Woods with his mother, Rita.

"Rasheed was pretty down," said basketball coach Bruce Peragallo, who arrived at the school at 6:15 a.m. and immediately spoke with Simmons. "He was obviously upset. I think he was happy to be out and in a safe place. I don't think his building was destroyed. But when you live in an apartment complex like that, you kind of build a family with the people around you, and he was concerned about everyone else."

Simmons, depending on one's perspective, is lucky.

By late afternoon, track coach Art Rostel had just about given up trying to find the whereabouts of one of his runners who also lives in Durham Woods.

"I've basically been on pins and needles all day," said Rostel. "I've been trying to check on him all day. I hope he is all right. Who knows how many kids from our school lived in that complex that might be unaccounted for."

Inside the high school, which bustled like a little city, Peragallo set up activities for the younger victims of the explosion. He organized basketball and whiffleball games in a small gymnasium adjacent to the larger one filled with cots and clothes. The children, who could have consulted with crisis counselors and medical doctors, were simply aided by some good clean fun.

"It was just a good way to keep the kids busy and their minds off of everything," said Peragallo. "It also gave their folks some free time to start reorganizing their lives, you know, insurance and all of that stuff. . . . Everything happened so quickly. The full impact won't hit them until they look back at what used to be."

"A lot of the kids were kind of confused," said Edison basketball coach Mike Meager, who teaches physical education at Herbert Hoover Elementary School. "We had a delayed opening today and a lot of the kids weren't sure of the whereabouts of their friends. One kid, his apartment burned to the ground, and some of the girls were kind of upset for him. You just try to be there and listen to them. You hear what they have to say and try to be very positive."

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Span provided front seat to night's drama

By **DEBORAH CANNONIE**

Staff Writer

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During the day, the concrete bridge is just one way to get from one side of Metuchen to the other. But Wednesday night, the Route 287 overpass became a front row, center seat, for a few hardy pedestrians to gawk at a spectacular display of mushrooming clouds and leaping flames from a natural gas pipeline explosion.

It was, as one spectator shivered, "like they dropped the Big One."

The midnight inferno occurred directly behind the Durham Woods apartment complex in Edison.

The heat from the conflagration was so intense that even from about a mile away it felt as close as one might be to the flames in a fireplace. The flames that mocked the pitiful attempts by fire hoses suspended from booms to put it out, shot, by some estimates, as high as 150 feet in the air..

Besides an acrid, burning rubber odor, the flames were accompanied by a constant, deafening roar that made conversation almost impossible. Few seemed inclined to talk in the face of such a spectacle.

"It sounded like a plane was ready to come down. It wasn't so much of a boom as a roar that rattled the house," said Donnie Dixon, an Orchard Street resident who hiked a half-hour from his home to watch from the bridge. Dixon had been watching television when he heard the sound.

"Suddenly, there was this light, like daylight. Kevin Kline had just come on David Letterman, so I knew it couldn't have been that late," said Lars Sorensen, another Orchard Street resident.

The colossal flames never waned, but at 1:05 a.m., a new fireball exploded, almost doubling for a moment the height of the inferno. As if on cue, an Edison police car rode through the area, warning spectators to leave "for their own safety."

"We are in a state of emergency," the cop intoned. "If you do not leave immediately, you'll face arrest."

The flames could even be seen from the George Washington Bridge. Sergio Monahan of Palisades Park was traveling over the span when he saw the explosion. "It was just like a Roman candle. It was really something," Monahan said, shaking his head at the inferno that roared and raked the sky.

Those who lived in the apartments closest to the flames seemed to have barely escaped with their lives. "The cars were melting, just melting," said a leather-

"Everything we own is in there. All we got is what you see here. But we were helping people. I don't care about material things. Helping people is all that mattered."

Denise Fridy
Durham Woods resident

jacketed man who initially grabbed his pants and ran when the explosion began.

"You saw the light right through the blinds without opening them. I thought that was it, that the Russians dropped the bomb," he said, noticing that the roofs of three apartments — those nearest the complex's tennis court and playground — were aflame when he left. After 25 minutes, he returned to the building to get the jacket he clutched around his body, "and some money, because I thought I was going to need it."

When he opened the door to the apartment, he thought he had left the lights on, but the electricity had died immediately after the explosion. What he saw was the searing glow of the inferno through the closed blinds. By this time, the heat inside the apartment had become so intense that "the paint was peeling off the walls," he said.

At police request, he parked his 1990 white Infiniti to block an entrance to Route 287. The hood of the car was dented with falling debris from the fire, debris that cracked the windshield, the roof, and rear of the car. The heat had melted the windshield wipers to the cracked glass.

"People were running. There was a panic. They were shouting and screaming," he said. "I think they were afraid of being trapped."

At the end of the overpass ramp another vehicle bore witness to the debris: its front and rear windows completely shattered, and its owner no where to be found.

From Building 49, Charles Spicer and his wife were just getting ready to turn out the lights when a much brighter light, "like it was daytime," came through the window.

"You could feel the heat without opening the window," Spicer said. His wife wrapped their baby in a blanket, and the family fled the scene on foot.

In his hand, Spicer clutched his video camera, he snatched from the couch on his way out. It was the only thing he had the presence of mind to rescue from his apartment. Ten minutes later, when he tried to return for a few other possessions, firemen on the scene blocked his re-entry.

"Everyone was screaming and running," Spicer said, as he and other residents escaped the close flames on foot.

At the bottom of the bridge ramp, Denise Fridy of Building 61 pulled her white hospital blanket around her thin bedrobe and pajamas. Her wide-eyed daughter shivered on a curb, while her mother methodically patted the girl's back. They had fled in their bedclothes.

"Everything we own is in there. All we got," she said, gesturing to the nightclothes on her family, "is what you see here."

"But we were helping people. I don't care about material things. Helping people is all that mattered," Fridy said, her eyes plump with unspilled tears.

Her daughter, Ieasha Crabbe, nodded as if she were fighting the urge to feel too much. "People couldn't get over the fence. We helped them over the fence."

"There were a few fences we went over," said Michael Valozzola, a resident of Building 28. He and others helped some to escape, including "a few kids and a guy in a wheelchair." Valozzola said he saw children run into a brook by the fence. "I guess they thought they'd be safe there."

White blankets became a kind of symbol for those who ripped them from their beds to flee the flames. A bare-chested man, clad only in pajama bottoms and grasping a kitchen-sized fire extinguisher, wandered in the residential street near the overpass. Adolescents in pajamas and baseball caps ran up and down the streets as if it were a Fourth of July fireworks display.

At the foot of the overpass, a Clara Barton First Aid vehicle tended to others who were being treated for what appeared to be minor injuries.

Most seemed dazed and in shock, almost as if they wished they would awake to find themselves in bed, and the whole scene just a bad nightmare.

By 2 a.m., the cops won the battle of the bridge, and the pedestrians were cleared off. The flames had dimmed only slightly since midnight.

Sorensen was one of the last to go. "It's going to be a long, long time before this is out," he said, with a last look over his shoulder.

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The Associated Press
Spectators watching the Durham Woods fireball
burn early yesterday morning.

Blast survivors seek closure

By **DORE CARROLL**
STAFF WRITER

The fiery explosion that tore through the midnight sky at the Durham Woods apartment complex March 23, 1994, still exists in some tenants' nightmares.

Five years after the blast, all the legal action it sparked — 2,200 claims from residents

EDISON near ground zero, and a liability suit targeting current and past owners of an adjacent asphalt company — has been settled.

Texas Eastern Transmission Corp. has paid close to \$65 million to settle the residents' lawsuits. Just last week, the Houston-based company reached an out-of-court settlement with the asphalt companies suspected of damaging the pipeline.

The financial terms were not disclosed, so residents may never know who ruptured the 36-inch underground natural-gas pipeline.

"A lot of people were still anxious to see what a jury felt was a proper allocation of blame," said Michael Lombardi, lead attorney for the law firms representing the residents. The settlement last week "deprived them of some degree of closure," he said.

None of the companies took responsibility for a tiny gouge in the pipeline, which a grand jury said had been

caused by unauthorized excavation. The liability case would have determined who struck the pipeline and when.

The pipeline company, now owned by Duke Energy Corp. of Charlotte, N.C., had targeted Quality Materials Inc. and prior owners Haskell Excavation Co. and Halecrest Construction Co. to recoup money it paid to residents.

Texas Eastern contended the pipeline was intact upon its last inspection in 1986.

A majority of the residents' lawsuits were for psychological trauma, such as nightmares and flashbacks, resulting from the blast.

The explosion destroyed eight apartment buildings, routed 128 families and sent more than 1,000 residents fleeing under a bright orange sky.

About 100 people sued for minor injuries, including broken bones, burns and bruises; still other lawsuits sought compensation for the personal property reduced to ashes and cars incinerated to their steel frames.

The only fatality was a 32-year-old woman in a neighboring apartment complex who suffered cardiac arrest in the explosion's aftermath.

"From a financial standpoint, most residents are satisfied with their settlements," said Lombardi. "From an emotional standpoint, I think a lot of people felt disappointed there wasn't an ultimate court determi-

nation of who was at fault."

Nancy Kemps was the first to file a lawsuit, days after the blast, and hers was among the final settlements in January, Lombardi said. Kemps, her husband and their young son are still not over their fear from that night.

"It was the most devastating thing in my life. We thought we were going to be blown up, and I told my son I'd see him in heaven," Kemps said. "The money will never change that."

Time has helped the healing process and moving away from the apartment complex has eased the young boy's trauma, she said.

"But there will never be closure," Kemps said.

"Five years may seem like a long time, but these kinds of cases can go on for 10 years or more," Lombardi said of the settlement pace. He noted the first cases were settled two years ago, three years after the blast.

The township and the Durham Woods complex owners were removed from Texas Eastern's liability suit last year.

The One-Call system implemented as a result of the Edison blast, to alert contractors of underground utility lines before digging, would not have made a bit of differ-



Home News Tribune/1994

● A fireball rises over the Durham Woods apartment complex in Edison in the aftermath of the natural-gas pipeline disaster on March 23, 1994.

ence in the Durham Woods explosion, Lombardi said.

Signs had been posted on the property, and the asphalt company located next to the apartment complex knew the pipeline was there, Lombardi said.

The company had created a

pond above the gas line, and occasionally dredged it with a backhoe, he said.

A grand jury determined the pipeline had been gouged by some type of heavy equipment.

"They ignored it," Lombardi said.

HMT
3/21/99

Gas-blast settlement averts liability trial

By ROSA CIRIANNI
STAFF WRITER

The hundreds of people affected by the devastating 1994 natural-gas pipeline explosion at the Durham Woods apartment complex may be able to find some closure now that an out-of-court deal has settled the case.

Texas Eastern Transmission Corp., the pipeline company, and five present and former owners of an asphalt company reached an agreement Friday after three days of intense negotiations in state Superior Court, said at-

torney Paul Garelick of Edison.

Judge Marina Corodemus oversaw the negotiations in her New Brunswick courtroom this week. Details of the settlement will not be disclosed.

The settlement means that a liability trial will not happen and residents most likely will never find out which party is to blame for the gas blast.

But a grand jury concluded that it was caused by unauthorized excavation by the asphalt company.

"In all honesty, I do not know if this trial would have

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BLAST: Settlement terms not disclosed

■ From Page A1

ever resulted in there being a determination as to who definitely struck the line and when it was struck," Garelick said.

He represented 460 residents who said they suffered physical, emotional and property-loss damages in the March 3, 1994, explosion that turned part of the Durham Woods complex and the surrounding area into an inferno.

Friday's settlement also concludes the issue of whether various owners of the asphalt company should be held liable for the explosion damage. The current owner, Quality Material Inc., had said it did not damage the pipeline, and previous business owners said the same.

Texas Eastern has paid \$65 million to settle more than 2,000 lawsuits stemming from the blast and its aftermath, in which cars melted, windows burst and eight apartment buildings went up in flames reaching 40 feet into the night sky.

The explosion sent more than 1,000 people fleeing from their

homes. About 100 people were injured, and a 32-year-old woman who lived nearby died from a heart attack.

The payouts covered costs to replace lost items, rebuild destroyed properties and compensate those involved who suffered emotional trauma and physical injuries.

"Obviously it will be marked. It will always be a part of us emotionally," said Richard Labbe, who lived in one of the Durham Woods apartments and remembers how he and his wife, Carol, were "blown out" of their bed that night.

"We lost everything we owned," he said. That included two cars, their possessions in their rented apartment, and "every picture and every piece of memorabilia."

"Anytime we see a large flame we see a large flashback," said Labbe, who still lives in Edison. He said he thinks Texas Eastern showed a "remarkable amount of responsibility" in the matter.

Garelick and the Lombardi & Lombardi law firm in Edison, where he works, got a \$15 million gross settlement from Texas East-

ern for their clients' property damage and injuries, including emotional suffering, he said.

His "educated guess" of the settlement paid to Texas Eastern on Friday was between \$8 million and \$20 million.

"I am glad that these co-defendants and Texas Eastern all owned up to their responsibility for the happening of this incident. I think the plaintiffs in this case should feel a sense of closure," said Garelick.

He said he thinks they should also get "a sense of satisfaction that these defendants in the end owned up to their responsibility."

The attorney also applauded Corodemus and Judge Judson Hamlin, who initially handled the case.

Garelick met with about six of his clients yesterday and said their reactions to the settlement varied.

"Some were emotionally drained at the thought that they may never know," he said, and "some cried today when they heard about it. No one expressed dissatisfaction."

An Associated Press report was incorporated into this story.

Governor flies to scene of gas explosion

Florida vacation
broken off short
in wake of blast

By THOMAS ZOLPER
Special to The Home News



JOE McLAUGHLIN/The Home News

Gov. Whitman fields questions from reporters yesterday after touring the scene of the gas pipeline explosion that leveled the apartment complex in Edison. Standing to her right is Edison Mayor George Spadoro.

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TRENTON.— There was never any doubt about canceling the vacation. Gov. Whitman caught a commercial flight from Miami and within hours was standing in tennis sneakers amid the charred rubble.

"The people of New Jersey are hurting. My place is to be with them, no question about it," Whitman said at a press conference.

Dressed in a pink polo shirt and khaki pants, Whitman walked through the leveled section of Durham Woods with an entourage of government officials and emergency personnel. She also visited displaced residents at a nearby high school which served as a temporary shelter. Several residents threw their arms around her.

Whitman was vacationing with her family in the Florida Keys, resting after a taxing few weeks of budget preparations, when her staff called at about 9:30 a.m. yesterday. She wasn't expected to return until Sunday.

Bob McHugh, her chief spokesman, said Whitman was briefed over the phone that fatalities appeared to be remarkably low.

"She said, 'I don't care. I'm coming up,'" McHugh said.

Grim tour

The governor flew into Newark International Airport; from there, a State Police helicopter ferried her to the Edison Municipal Building. She met there with Mayor George Spadoro and other local officials.

Whitman was briefed for about 15 minutes at Pines Manor, a nearby banquet hall, and then rode about a mile in a state-owned car to Durham Woods.

Walking down what remained of Reading Avenue in the northwestern corner of the apartment

complex, Whitman viewed what she later described as a "melt-down." Blackened stoves and hot water heaters, twisted girders and piles of bleached bricks were all that remained of entire apartment buildings.

Cars that had been parked on the street when residents went to bed the night before were now eviscerated by intense heat and fire, their tires melted and their paint burned away. The metal chains of a child's swing set hung limply, their rubber seats burned up.

Whitman asked about the progress authorities were making, and posed specific questions about how a gas pipeline is operated, said Spadoro, who accompanied her.

"We were just extraordinarily lucky. If it turns out that there was just one fatality as a result of this blast it's only because we were extraordinarily lucky," Whitman told reporters.

Safety checks

Whitman, a former president of the state Board of Public Utilities,

is more than a little familiar with natural-gas operations, McHugh said. At the press conference she fielded both general and technical questions, turning only a few times for answers to Mayor Spadoro or Herb Tate, chairman of the Board of Regulatory Commissioners.

She said the citizens of New Jersey who live near gas lines need not feel in danger.

"There's an ongoing safety mechanism. The Department of Transportation Office of Pipeline Safety at the federal level sets stan-

dards that are constantly being monitored and checked. There was absolutely no indication that there was anything wrong with this pipeline," Whitman said.

Whitman said there was no need for her to declare the area a disaster, since county officials had taken that step.

"If we need to declare a disaster to get federal dollars, we will," she added.

Thomas Zolper is a staff writer in the Asbury Park Press Statehouse Bureau.

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Terror and separation

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Fleeing residents feared for each other

Staff Report NT 3/25/94

Janet Christy and Donald Morgan embraced outside Edison High School, crying unashamedly as cameras whirled around them.

"We're semi-engaged," sobbed Christy, holding Morgan tight. "He lives in a different building at the complex."

The couple was reunited at about 8:30 a.m. yesterday, more than eight hours after eight buildings at the Durham Woods Apartment Complex where they lived were destroyed in a gas main rupture's rush of flames.

"I went directly to her apartment from mine, but she had already left," Morgan said to a reporter, then turned to Christy and tenderly said, "Don't worry about a thing."

Residents of Durham Woods Apartments fled from their homes in whatever direction they deemed safe the moment



CARL D. FORINO/Staff Photographer

Janet Christy and Donald Morgan reunited, eight hours after the blast.

after the explosion. Some carried a few belongings; most left with only the clothes on their backs.

Firefighters and residents banged on doors to alert tenants and helped them

See HE WAS Page A-13

He was screaming 'It's the end of the world'

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leave as quickly as possible.

"We've just got each other," cried Christy. "I thought it was a thunderstorm but it was too loud, so I then thought a plane had crashed." Then came the full horror of what had happened.

The couple spent eight frantic hours trying to track each other down until their emotional reunion.

Kharine and Sterling Reese had watched Hurricane Andrew destroy their home in Florida in 1992. Yesterday, as she slowly sipped coffee in the Edison High School cafeteria, which had been converted into a shelter, Kharine Reese sighed, "I thought I was safe here."

She was at work at nearby JFK Medical Center when she heard about the explosion.

Sterling Reese was at home with the couple's two sons, Sterling and Brandon, ages 4 and 6. "It sounded like a low rumbling, like turning on

a blowtorch, but magnified 10,000 times," he said. "You could see bright lights all around and you could feel the intense heat."

"The first thing on my mind was that it was the apartment gas line on fire, the one that runs into each unit. The flames just shot over a 20-foot embankment."

"I don't think anyone knew there was a major gas line running by."

Sterling Reese placed several calls to the hospital and then drove his sons to a relative's home in Marlboro. The couple finally located each other at a diner.

Not only emergency-management crews snapped into action yesterday. The management of the nearby Clarion Hotel dispatched three company vans to pick up evacuees shortly after the explosion shook the hotel and flames shot into the air.

General Manager Ron Lichtenberger said the vehicles rounded up residents as they wandered about the New Durham

Road area and brought them to the hotel. There they were offered coffee, blankets, and a place to stay before being transferred to the high school shelter.

Not everybody got a ride.

For hundreds of Durham Woods tenants, escape from the stricken complex meant a midnight walk in the woods.

Seeing the complex's Reading Road exit clogged, many who tried to drive away abandoned their cars on the grassy lawns abutting a swampy patch of woods.

"There's no emergency exit out of that place," stammered an angry David Gilenson, 30, a resident of Building 63.

Residents along Karen Place, a street separated from the complex by a patch of woods, watched hundreds of bedraggled and scared refugees like the Gilensons wander into their back yards.

"They just started coming over the fences, barefoot, and then laying on the grass with their kids," said Bob Rodriguez, 38, a resident

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of Karen Place.

"There were hundreds of people, people in nightgowns, T-shirts, boxer shorts, and nothing else," said Laura Gilenson, 30.

At the high school shelter, volunteers from various American Red Cross chapters went from table to table asking residents if they had any special medical needs, taking their names, gently inquiring whether any family member was missing.

Most of the 150 evacuees there sat in groups and talked softly. They appeared to be in shock.

John Gallagher sat alone in a corner of the large cafeteria at 4 a.m., waiting to hear from his wife. The couple had been separated as they ran from their apartment.

Gallagher had a gauze bandage wrapped around his head. He had slipped and fallen while running from the flames. "After I fell, she was ahead of me and I couldn't find her. I was told not to worry. I know she got out," he said.

Dolores Nolan, executive direc-

tor of the Central New Jersey Chapter of the Red Cross, said several evacuees asked for assistance in finding people who had not showed up at the shelter. "One man lost his mother who doesn't speak English," Nolan said. And, an 11-year-old was missing her parents.

For 2-year-old Michael Hill and his year-old brother Robert, sleep meant sprawling out on a round Formica tabletop in the cafeteria, tucked under a white flannel blanket sprinkled with Snoopys.

"I really don't think they know what's going on," Debra Hill said of her sons. "My older son was frightened but was very quiet. . . . My husband was the calm one and made sure we got out. . . . I was a nervous wreck."

Mike Ross, 12, had been jolted from his sleep by the explosion and rushed to wake up his mom and his 9-year-old sister, Sheena.

"I was screaming, 'It's the end of the world' and yelling to my mother and sister to hurry up and

get out," Mike said.

Several residents who made their way to the high school reported that their apartment windows were hot to the touch.

"All the windows just popped out, and the verticals on the balcony window were flying about even though the window was shut," said Bozena Bober as she huddled at a cafeteria table with her husband, Andy. The couple feared the worst because their unit was in the main area of devastation.

The Bobers said that once they fled the complex, nearby residents Ken and Frances Small approached them and offered to help. "They said they came to help instead of just to watch," Bozena Bober said. "I want to thank them for taking us in for a few hours."

The Bobers then looked at each other and wondered out loud what to do next. They realized that they had no idea.

Staff Writers Jim Krane, Michelle J. Kuhn, Lisa Tozzi, and Wayne F. Yourstone contributed to this report.

RELIEF DRIVE

Disaster brings out the best in many

Homes opened to total strangers

By REGINA McENERY
Home News Staff Writer

While relief workers did what came naturally, private citizens and companies also reached out in every way they could to help victims of the Durham Woods explosion.

Take Dr. Herish Bhatt, a Woodbridge physician who heard the blast from his bedroom and decided to investigate. He and his wife, Alta, arrived at the scene shortly after 12:15 a.m. and saw people running in all directions.

Among them were two families with no place to go. Bhatt ended up bringing the six people, including a baby and an elderly woman, home for the night.

He also took one of his temporary house guests to John F. Kennedy Medical Center in Edison, where she was treated yesterday for a severe knee wound sustained during the explosion.

Sidney and Rita White, both 71 and residents of the ill-fated complex, ended up taking another family to Franklin after their apartment was all but obliterated. White said he ran across the family — a husband, wife, mother-in-law and 2-week-old baby — shortly after starting up his car and attempting to flee the scene.

So White took the family to the home of relatives in Franklin.

Throughout Middlesex County and beyond, agencies and businesses responded to the disaster with offers of food, medical supplies, clothing, shelter and services.

Both Edison and Metuchen high schools were turned into temporary shelters.

At the Metuchen shelter, custodians were called in early to work, and responded by donating the extra pay to the explosion victims.

Lt. Edgar George of the Salvation Army in New Brunswick said between 40 and 50 volunteers worked around the clock providing refreshments, clothing and other staples for emergency crews and victims.

George said he had also been trying to find hotel and motel rooms for people displaced by the accident. The Econo Lodge in New Brunswick and the New Brunswick Hotel provided rooms for some of the victims, George said.

Nurses from MCOSS Nursing Services, a visiting nurse association, also helped out at the Edison shelter, treating people for burns, cuts, scrapes, smoke inhalation and chest pain, and helping people who were forced to leave medications behind.

AT&T, the telecommunications giant based in Basking Ridge, also reached out to victims by helping staff Red Cross emergency 800 numbers and providing free long-distance service to victims.

Midlantic National Bank in Edison said it plans to offer special reduced-interest loans of up to \$10,000 to victims. To apply, call (908) 855-2808.

A drive to collect food, clothing and other items for people who lost belongings was started by Trenton radio station WKXW-FM, also known as New Jersey 101.5. Drop-off locations to collect clothing, nonperishable food items in factory-sealed packages, baby-care items and personal-care items have been set up at Freehold Raceway Mall, Freehold; Bridgewater Commons Mall, Bridgewater; Quakerbridge Mall, Lawrenceville; Brunswick Square Mall, East Brunswick; and Menlo Park Mall, Edison. The Home News and The Asbury Park Press, newspapers operated by the station's parent company, will deliver collected items to the South Plainfield Rescue Squad, which also is involved with the relief efforts.

Catholic Charities in the Metuchen diocese announced its own drive for donations of food and clothing at its office at 26 Safran Ave., Edison. It also said it has arranged with Camp Kiddie Keep Well of Edison to arrange housing. Ozanam Family Shelter in Edison and Emmanuel Place in Perth Amboy also were offering housing.

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In schools . . . absent classmates

Crisis teams counseling worried students

By JENNIFER L. BALJKO
Home News Staff Writer

EDISON — As emergency crews worked around the clock to sort through the rubble left by yesterday's gas explosion, school officials had another task: trying to create a sense of normalcy in schools throughout the district.

Crisis intervention teams from the school district and the University of Medicine and Dentistry in New Jersey worked with psychologists, social workers, teachers and school administrators to assure students that they were no longer in danger and help them sort through their feelings.

"We have provided crisis counselors from UMDNJ to augment our guidance staff and deal with the student reaction," said schools Superintendent Joseph Kreskey, who was at Edison High School most of the day yesterday helping with relief efforts. He said much of the concern centered around absent classmates.

Edison High School was closed yesterday and turned into a evacuation center for the survivors. The 16 other schools in the district had delayed two-hour openings.

Yesterday's high school closing also sparked concern about how the district would make up for the lost day.

Kreskey said he was going to ask the state Department of Education to waive its 180-day instruction requirement in this case because of the state of emergency declared in the municipality. With this winter's bad weather, the district has used its allowable make-up days and has already canceled next week's spring break.

The explosion, he said, had a direct impact on 200 to 300 of the district's 12,000 students. Most of the affected students attended three schools — Edison High School, Herbert Hoover Middle School and Lincoln Elementary School. Some are also enrolled at Thomas Jefferson Middle School,

Woodbrook Elementary School and Woodrow Wilson Middle School.

School officials said the counseling sessions varied from one-to-one meetings to group discussions, depending on the concerns expressed by the children.

At Thomas Jefferson school, counselors met with about a half-dozen children individually and spoke to the English as a Second Language class, said Principal Ross Capaccio.

"Our school has six students that come from the area that was affected and we are aware of at least one of those students losing her home," said Capaccio, adding that those students are enrolled in the ESL class. "Students were concerned in the ESL class . . . Once they were assured that all the stu-

dents were safe, the level of anxiety dropped."

Arlene Illes, Herbert Hoover's principal, said her students were anxious to learn about what happened to the 15 Durham Woods families with children attending their school.

"The kids wanted to talk and had questions about what happened," said Illes. "And the kids wanted to do something for (the 15 families)."

She said the school was a drop-off site for food and clothing donations, so to get them involved in the relief efforts she allowed the students to help box the items.

Another way the school helped students work through the shock of the explosion was to incorporate different facets of it in daily lesson plans.

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Notes from a night of horror in Edison

Scene evokes memories of the past and concerns for future

Vivid memories

The explosion in Edison brought back vivid memories for Matthew J. Zangara of the blast in 1950 that killed 31 dock workers who were moving ammunition to a barge on the South Amboy waterfront.

"I didn't realize it was so bad when I first heard about it on the radio this morning," said Zangara, now an East Brunswick resident, referring to the Edison explosion. "Later, when I found out there was a huge crater, I knew it was as bad as what we went through."

It was the afternoon of May 19, 1950. Zangara — then a 22-year-old New Brunswick resident — took his girlfriend,

21-year-old Violet Sporek, shopping in Perth Amboy. While they were driving home through South Amboy, they heard a loud explosion and saw flames shooting into the sky nearby.

"I swore that the Russians had dropped a bomb on us," Zangara recalled.

A short time later, a piece of shrapnel crashed through the front windshield and landed on the floor of the car. Neither Zangara nor Sporek was injured.

They stopped at a gas station, where the attendant walked through what had been a door and

told them the pumps weren't working. They stopped at a bar, where an overturned jukebox still played.

They stopped near a railroad bridge and got out of the car, only to be greeted by black soot and wood debris raining down from the sky.

It took Zangara an hour to take Sporek home and return to New Brunswick, where he stopped in a tavern to calm his nerves.

"I was still shaking, so I drank a couple shots," Zangara said.

— Steve Klein

Heat flash and a hill

Woodbridge Township was one of the many surrounding municipalities to dispatch its police officers to Edison to respond to the gas line explosion and its aftermath.

Lt. Willie Hrynyk said some of the Vietnam veterans among his officers returned from the blast site yesterday afternoon saying they had never seen such devastation.

"They said even bomb craters weren't that bad," he said.

Hrynyk said the position of a hill near the complex kept more apartments from being destroyed.

"There was a heat flash. But, the hill kept it from going directly to the complex, otherwise there would have been a lot more damage."

— Michelle Sahn

Looters get the boot

As thousands of residents were fleeing Durham Woods early yesterday morning, Edison police said, rescue personnel arrived — and so did looters.

Mayor George Spadaro said the looting occurred "very early on."

That was put to a stop very early."

Within hours, the mayor said, the site was secured.

— Wendi B. Leyko

Canines pitched in, too

Four canine teams were among the units sent yesterday to search for signs of life at the Durham Woods apartments.

The U.S. Disaster Team Canine Search and Rescue Unit, Watchung Search and Rescue, Ramapo Search and Rescue and a military police canine unit from the Monmouth military base brought a dozen dogs trained in search-and-rescue techniques to the site of the Edison disaster.

— Sarah Wood

Blast brought out best in many

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By RICK MALWITZ
Staff Writer

Carl Fridy had his life and his wife, and a sore shoulder and a smile.

Just another hero on the night Hell dropped in on Edison.

Escape. That was all Fridy and his wife, Denise, could think about

when fire threatened their Durham Woods apartment.

"The fear in the faces is something I'll never forget," said Denise.

"We ran for the woods. Some people wanted to get in the water, just in case," said Fridy, referring to a brook adjacent to the complex.

But their escape was stalled when they came to fences, surrounding back yards. "This high," said Fridy, raising his hands to shoulder level.

It was at the fence Fridy realized there was a man worse off than he. The man was in a wheelchair.

"I think he was paralyzed from here down," said Friday, with his hand at shoulder. "We tried lifting him and couldn't."

Finally, Fridy said, the man was lifted from the wheelchair, over the fences. Fridy took the wheelchair.

"Heavy. You wouldn't believe how heavy it was. That's why my shoulder hurts so much."

But Fridy, a black man, smiled at the pain in his shoulder.

The man in the wheelchair was white.

"You know, black, white, makes no difference. Everybody starts helping everybody."

One man Fridy, was every man yesterday. Weary and sad at loss, grateful for life, wanting to help.

"You thank God, again and again and again," said Denise, spending her sleepless night at the cafeteria at Edison High School.

"I lost . . . everything," said 67-year-old Al Warshawsky, who had to jump from his second-floor rear balcony after finding his front porch in flames.

"Pictures. Birth certificates. Investment papers. Family records from 1910; my wife categorized everything. Jewelry. My wallet. My eyeglasses. My teeth. Everything."

Joe Pogoloff figured he lost everything, too. Most precious to him was a set of Ben Hogan golf clubs that were personally designed for him.

"Those you can't replace," said Pogoloff, who escaped with shoes, slacks and a Walnut Creek golf jacket.

Pogoloff held out hope his building survived. Building 10.

When Mayor George A. Spadaro came to the high school the mayor was asked if he knew the numbers of the buildings that were leveled. He said he didn't know the numbers.

When I left Pogoloff he was still hoping.

Pogoloff, who had not gotten

around to insuring the contents of his apartment, was steady, as he talked.

Where does this steadiness, this life-goes-on attitude come from? I asked.

"What are the alternatives?" he said, with the best smile he could muster.

In the next moment, Carl Fridy was talking to Joe Pogoloff about golf courses in California.

They were whole people. They had their health. So what else is there?

When I got to the office, I found out Building 10 was destroyed, and I thought about Joe Pogoloff and his Ben Hogans. Reality bites.

There are other people who can feel good about themselves, after what happened.

Arnold Singer was watching the Rangers' hockey game at his house on Karen Place. He had the blinds drawn, but the drawn blinds could not keep out the light of the explosion.

Soon a flood of refugees came down his block, two of them women wrapped in blankets, and scared. "One of them had a heart problem," said Singer.

Singer drove them to a shelter. Nothing too heroic. But he had every right to feel good about this small act of kindness.

Finally, there are the pros. They can feel good about themselves.

In the seven hours after midnight I saw firefighters, policemen, the Edison mayor, Red Cross workers, the Rosas — a husband and wife team from the Salvation Army — emergency workers and utility workers, who had jobs to do and did them.

Early yesterday, I saw a community become a community, when pros did their job, when good people came out of the woodwork to help. Just because.

In the afternoon, Beth Donato of Fords called.

Donato works at the Cohan & Eckhaus law firm, at 21 Ernston Road in Sayreville. She said the firm will collect food, clothing and money (with checks payable to the American Red Cross).

The idea was hers. She said she wanted to do something.

Can I ask you why?

"Because we should help our own."