

25 October 2011

Gas Curtailment Ordered Following Gas Pipeline Leak

Gas Industry Co advises that a directive has been issued for the immediate curtailment of gas use by all consumers other than residential customers in the areas north of King Country and in the Bay of Plenty following a serious gas escape from a high pressure pipeline in Taranaki.

The directive, issued by the gas industry Critical Contingency Operator, is intended to manage available gas supplies while the cause of the gas escape is determined and the likely extent of the resulting outage assessed.

The Critical Contingency Operator was advised early this morning of a material gas escape resulting in a loss of pressure on the large Maui pipeline which transports gas north from Taranaki. The escape occurred in the remote White Cliffs area north of New Plymouth.

The pipeline has been isolated and depressurised. A curtailment directive was immediately issued for gas-fired units at the Huntly, Otahuhu and Southdown power stations. This has since been extended to all non-residential consumers, including essential services, on the North Pipeline, Bay of Plenty Pipeline and the Morrinsville lateral pipeline.

An alternative smaller pipeline is being used to maintain limited gas supplies into the affected residential areas, but supply could be at risk without immediate curtailment by commercial and industrial users. Gas retailers are expected to immediately implement their plans to inform their industrial and commercial customers and ensure the curtailment directive is acted on.

While residential customers are not covered by the curtailment directive, they are asked to limit their use of gas as far as possible.

Technical experts are preparing to excavate the section of pipeline to determine the cause of the gas escape. This is expected to take most of today and, until the cause is identified, there can be no estimate of when repairs will be effected.

The Maui Pipeline is owned by Maui Development Limited, with Vector contracted as technical operator. Vector also fulfils the role of Critical Contingency Operator.

Gas consumers with concerns should contact their gas retailer:

Media contacts for information on aspects of the gas supply contingency:

Pipeline Operations & Assets

Vector: Sandy Hodge, 021 579 522

Maui Development Ltd: Shona Geary, 027 431 1240

Customers

Contact Energy: Jeremy Seed, 021 0233 2663

Genesis Energy (also Energy Online): Richard Gordon, 021 681 305

Todd Energy (Nova/Bay of Plenty Energy): Diana Price, 04 931 6187

Energy Direct: Call Centre 0800 567 777

Mercury Energy: 0800 101 810

Regulatory

Gas Industry Co: Keith FitzPatrick, 027 767 1152

Note:

Gas Industry Co is the industry body and co-regulator. It administers the Gas Governance (Critical Contingency Management) Regulations 2008. The purpose of these regulations is to achieve the effective management of critical gas outages and other security of supply contingencies, without compromising long-term security of supply. Gas Industry Co has appointed Vector Limited to fulfil the function of Critical Contingency Operator.