U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Research and
Special Programs
Administration**

400 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

JUL 16 2001

Mr. James Barron
President
Common Ground Alliance
1201 Pauls Lane
Joppa, MD 21085

Dear Mr. Barron: Jim

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has issued two Safety Recommendations to the Office of Pipeline Safety based on its investigation of a natural gas accident in the South Riding community in Loudoun County, Virginia. Enclosed is a copy of the recommendation letter for your information.

The NTSB determined that the probable cause of this July 7, 1998, accident was corrosion by a splice in a triplex electric service line that resulted in arcing and overheating of an adjacent polyethylene gas service line. The gas line failed and natural gas migrated into the basement of the house and ignited. The house was destroyed, one person died, and three were injured.

The NTSB Safety Recommendations address separation of underground facilities and mandatory installation of excess flow valves:

P-01-1 Require gas utility operators to maintain a specified minimum separation distance, sufficient to protect against both thermal and mechanical damage, between plastic gas service lines and underground electrical facilities whenever they install a new gas service line or perform maintenance on existing lines.

P-01-2 Require that excess flow valves be installed in all new and renewed gas service lines, regardless of a customer's classification, when the operating conditions are compatible with readily available valves.

OPS has met with representatives of various industry and governmental organizations to discuss the issue of underground facility separations. These representatives recommended that we address underground separation between gas and electric service lines as part of the damage prevention "best practices" initiative. Further, OPS will reexamine whether it should require mandatory installation of EFVs on new and renewed gas service lines for both residential and commercial customers.

I invite the Common Ground Alliance (CGA) to work with OPS in the development of our response and followup to these NTSB Safety Recommendations. I hope to discuss this and several of our other proposals with you at the next CGA Board of Directors' meeting.

If you have any questions, please contact me or Richard Huriaux, at 202-366-4595.

Sincerely,

Stacey L. Gerard
Associate Administrator
for Pipeline Safety

Enclosure

cc: Robert Chipkevich, NTSB
Rod Dyck, NTSB