

June 17, 1997

Mr. Edward J. Ondak
Director, Western Regional Office
Office of Pipeline Safety
Suite A-250
12600 W. Colfax Avenue
Lakewood, CO 80215

Dear Mr. Ondak:

This responds to your letter of April 22, 1997, about emergency procedures under 49 CFR 192.615(a)(3)(I) for handling notices of gas detected inside buildings. You ask if we have an official position on what operators should tell someone who calls to report smelling gas inside a house. The question arises because some operators tell callers to leave the house immediately without first opening windows and doors. In contrast, the traditional response has been to tell callers to open all accessible windows and doors before exiting. In either case, the operator sends personnel to the site to investigate the report.

Section 192.615(a)(3)(I) allows operators latitude in responding to notices of gas odor inside buildings. As long as an operators response is prompt and is effective in minimizing the hazard, there would be little reason, if any, to challenge the appropriateness of the operators procedures. Given the pros and cons of taking time in a gas emergency to open windows and doors before exiting, we do not think there is sufficient reason to challenge the effectiveness of a response that tells callers to exit quickly without stopping to open windows and doors.

If you need additional information, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Richard D. Huriaux
Director for Technology and Regulations
Office of Pipeline Safety