



CHAIR PHYLLIS J. RANDALL NEWSLETTER



Hello, Loudoun

Earlier today, many people who live and work in Loudoun County smelled the strong odor of natural gas. As a result, the county's Emergency Communications Center was overwhelmed with phone calls from concerned residents. In addition, the odor of gas prompted residents, schools, and the Loudoun County Fire and Rescue Department to take precautionary actions. The odor was caused by the planned venting of natural gas by Dominion Transmission. Due to the concerns raised by the public and the county, I spoke earlier today with Dominion officials to express my disappointment about how the company handled today's maintenance activities.

The venting of gas began this morning at 8:00 am at two Dominion Transmission facilities: one in the vicinity of Cove Point Lane in Leesburg and another off Bull Run Post Office Road in Fairfax County. The purpose of this venting involved purging natural gas from a segment of pipeline to allow for planned upgrades. Dominion first notified the county and some members of the public who live around the facilities about their plans on Friday evening, September 23, which did not allow much time to alert the public about the potential for noticing natural gas odorant this morning. In addition, today's humid weather with low cloud cover was not conducive to venting gas; the odor lingered because the gas did not dissipate as quickly as it would on a clear day. The odor was not confined to the work areas and was detected across the county in the Dulles, Ashburn and Blue Ridge Districts.

Venting natural gas is a necessary part of Dominion's work. Therefore, I have asked Dominion officials to reevaluate their practices and procedures for this type of work in the future to avoid unnecessary alarm by the public. I have requested that Dominion consider weather forecasts when scheduling venting activities. I have also asked Dominion to provide the county, members of the public, and other stakeholders with more advanced notice so we can better anticipate the possibility of smelling of natural gas odorant, which may help to allay concerns in the future.

Dominion Transmission released a statement earlier today in which it expressed an apology for today's event. You can read the full statement online here: <https://www.loudoun.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=3542>.

Best Regards,

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