

Towngas' response to the verdict of the inquest
into the Wai King Building incident

(28 June 2007) The Hong Kong and China Gas Company Limited (Towngas) feels deeply sorry for the incident of a gas leak at Jordan Valley North Road in Ngau Tau Kok on 11 April 2006, which unfortunately resulted in the deaths of two residents of Wai King Building. We offer our heartfelt condolences to the family members of the deceased.

The coroner's inquest conducted by the Coroner's Court concluded today with a verdict that the two victims died of accident. Towngas respects this judgment. Meanwhile, the Jury has made a number of comments and recommendations, some of which have already been implemented by Towngas following the incident. We will carefully evaluate all remaining recommendations.

Strengthening Communications and Contingency Management

In the wake of the Wai King Building incident, we have established a mechanism to improve communications at times of emergency. This includes new measures to ensure that duty engineers who are despatched to sites where there is a suspected gas leak must listen to the taped conversation between the caller and the emergency hotline operator, prior to their arrival at the sites. In this way, we will ensure that our frontline field staff are equipped with accurate, first-hand information. We will also explore ways to play back the taped conversation to the Fire Services Department.

In addition to emergency technicians and the duty engineer, an emergency coordinator will also be despatched to the scene of a suspected leak, to liaise with the fire service officers, the police officers, and the management staff of buildings in the vicinity.

Towngas has also been organising training sessions for staff from different divisions to improve their communication skills, and to enhance their ability to handle emergencies.

Towngas' emergency vans are currently equipped with the most updated underground pipeline map. We will also consider equipping the vans with laptop computers so that our staff can search for necessary information at any time in a speedy manner.

Pipeline Replacement Programme

Towngas has a pipeline network that extends over 3000 km, of which 450 km are medium-pressure ductile iron pipes. Subsequent to our deliberations with the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD), Towngas is committed to replacing within two years all of the medium-pressure ductile iron pipes which have been in use for 20 years or above, which amount to 150 km in length. To date, some 40% of the work has been completed, and we are confident that the programme can be completed by the end of June 2008.

Promotion of Gas Safety

During the past year, Towngas has conducted gas safety talks with over 2,000 property management staff and the Fire Prevention Committees of 17 District

Councils. Safety pamphlets and VCDs have been made available to outline vital safety measures in the event of a suspected gas leak. This educational campaign aims to enhance public knowledge and raise public awareness of gas safety.

Towngas is always committed to providing the people of Hong Kong with a safe and reliable gas supply. It is, without question, our responsibility to ensure a safe pipeline network. We sincerely hope that the measures outlined above will further enhance the level of our gas safety.

Last but not least, we thank the Coroner and the Jury for their diligence and careful deliberations regarding this incident. We will review our safety measures in the light of the Jury's comments and recommendations, to ensure better performance in the future.

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