



Media Release

For Immediate Release

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SaskEnergy completes investigation into Prud'homme cavern wellhead fire; decommissions affected underground storage cavern

SaskEnergy has completed the investigation into the October 2014 gas release and fire at its Prud'homme natural gas storage facility east of Saskatoon. The nine-day incident began October 11th, 2014 at one of the seven underground natural gas storage caverns at the facility.

No one was hurt in the incident, and no service was lost to any residential, business or industrial customer. The gas release was safely contained on October 17th with the installation of a new wellhead; safety testing and site clearance were completed two days later. The remaining caverns at the site were not impacted.

SaskEnergy's investigation, using the resources of industry experts, determined the cause of the incident was a failure in the steel casing pipe used to inject and remove natural gas from the underground cavern. A thorough examination of the impacted cavern could only be conducted after the remaining gas was safely removed, and the cavern was filled with water. This process was carefully monitored and took several months to complete.

The failure, located about two metres below ground, allowed natural gas to leak into an external concrete casing protecting the pipe, where it moved up and released through a valve on the side of the cavern wellhead. The force of the high pressure natural gas release damaged the wellhead building, causing a spark and the resulting fire.

As part of the review of this incident, SaskEnergy examined the remainder of its storage caverns across Saskatchewan to verify the integrity of each steel casing pipe. SaskEnergy has also implemented additional safety measures at all cavern facilities, including additional support for internal casing structures and the design of high capacity external vents, to allow large volumes of gas to be safely directed to atmosphere in any situation involving a gas leak.

The affected cavern has been decommissioned with no plans to repair and recertify it for use at this time. SaskEnergy continues to operate 18 storage caverns, located at six locations across the province, which play an important role in meeting the demands of Saskatchewan customers during peak winter months. Over the past several years, SaskEnergy has also enhanced its ability to provide service to its customers, which allows it to operate with fewer storage caverns. These enhancements include investments in increased pipeline capacity and the use of new technology, such as mobile compression, Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) and Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG).

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