

Systematic Leakage Surveys of the Natural Gas Reticulation system and Greenhouse Gas Abatement schemes, TWU and AWU Submission.

The Unions representing the GAS Industry in Victoria have previously provided a submission to Energy Safe Victoria and the Victorian Government seeking to overturn an ESV decision allowing the Gas Distribution Companies (in particular SP Aus net and Alinta) to no longer perform Natural Gas leakage surveys across their reticulation systems.

In particular the companies are no longer obliged to systematically survey gas leaks as they had in the past, on pipe types such as poly and protected steel. This decision was determined by ESV based on a risk management assessment that concluded poly and protected steel pipes which leak will not risk public safety through possible explosion.

Whilst the union does not agree with ESV's decision on safety grounds at the same time we rejected the decision on environmental grounds.

The unions' submission reference historical data which makes clear that the previous gas leakage surveys on poly and protected steel pipe types resulted in between 15 to 20% of leaks being sufficient to be included in the companies' preventative maintenance programs and hence repaired.

These leaks of natural gas are no longer repaired and are a direct contributor to Greenhouse gases. Any consideration of a Greenhouse gas abatement strategy should involve operators of Gas Distribution/Transmission systems being obliged to perform leakage surveys across their entire pipe system, regardless of pipe type. Surveying and repair of leaking natural gas pipes is the "low hanging fruit" of reducing greenhouse gases entering the atmosphere.

In 2006 approximately 1500 already identified leaks were removed from the Gas Companies systems within the state of Victoria by means of doing a 'quasi' risk assessment, consequently deeming them as non existent. Gas escapes do not improve with age.

A complete survey would enable relevant authorities to gain a more accurate picture of the amount of natural gas entering the atmosphere. Obviously the Union believes that on environmental and public safety grounds that the Companies should both survey and repair all pipe types in their networks and at the very least a comprehensive survey would enable authorities to quantify the environmental effect and impose a cost on Gas distribution companies who choose to artificially reduce their costs, by not surveying all pipe types.

Yours Sincerely  
Mick Werrick & Colin Heath  
28/05/2008.