



February 1, 2012

To: Robert W. Healy
City Manager

From: Lisa Peterson
Commissioner of Public Works

Re: Council order 012 – 4 Steam Leak on Second Street

On about 2:30pm on the afternoon of Thursday, January 12th on Second Street at Hurley Street, a steam explosion occurred causing a steam release at this location. The cause of the explosion was a joint failure within the steam line underneath 2nd street. Veolia Steam immediately responded and contacted The Cambridge Emergency Services who made reverse 911 calls to the adjacent residents. This was followed up by Veolia who went door to door asking people to use their rear entrances to enter and exit their properties. The block between Hurley and Charles Street was then cordoned off while the abatement company was called to the site. They arrived within an hour. Four air monitors were set up adjacent to the site and the company began a sampling and cleaning operation. Immediately adjacent to the manhole a small number of samples indicated some trace asbestos but none of the other samples taken from dust/debris or from the four air monitoring devices showed any asbestos present. The manhole and pipe in question are insulated in a fiberglass and the asbestos may have come from a remnant piece of asbestos containing material in the surrounding soil. In total 90 air and wipe samples were taken and the results were sent to the Public Health Department for their review as well. The threat of airborne pollution was further reduced because of the wet weather. Emergency response personnel were informed that residents should contact the Public Health Department if they had any concerns.

The roadway and westerly sidewalk on 2nd Street were opened early on Friday after both were thoroughly swept and cleaned; all cars and bikes in the area were also allowed leave as they too had been thoroughly cleaned. The easterly sidewalk was opened later in the morning after a similar cleaning operation. Additional samples were then taken from the adjacent trees and from window sills and roofs of the nearby buildings.

Repair work began on the steam line on Friday afternoon and the steam company brought boilers and generators onto Second Street to maintain steam supply to the courthouse and the Registry of Deeds. Initially, DPW restricted the repair operation to between 7am and 10pm over the week end and until the work was completed, but after further discussions with the community on Saturday January 14th repair work was allowed through the night so as to speed up the repair work and get the two buildings back on line.

In 2009/2010 the Department of Public Works required that Veolia Steam conduct a thorough review of their system in the City and to propose a schedule for repairs and improvements throughout. Initially, they had indicated that they expected to complete all joint repairs within a ten year period but as of now all of the joint repair work is expected to be completed by the end of this year. Similarly, the City expects an accelerated schedule associated with their manhole cover replacement program throughout the City, As

of now all of the joint repair work has been completed on Second Street except for a service joint to the Courthouse. The Steam Company is presently reviewing with the Court house how best to address such and will co-ordinate with the City when such repair is to be scheduled.