



**Press Release:**

**December 16, 2024**

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TO: All media  
From: Joe Rueschenberg  
712-755-5182

The Harlan Municipal Utilities (HMU) as issued the following statement regarding the gas leak on Friday, December 13 and the resulting evacuation.

At 11:00 am there was a gas leak reported to HMU and emergency personnel were dispatched. Upon arrival at the location of 4<sup>th</sup> & Hill St. HMU personnel called the Harlan Fire Department (HFD) to assist. The HFD then arrived and assessed the situation and proceeded with a mandatory evacuation.

HMU crews discovered a cracked flange on a valve and proceeded with replacement of the valve. At around 2:45 pm a 'stopple' was inserted, which stops the gas flow in the main. Since the HMU distribution system is loop fed gas flowed to individual residences and businesses and only (1) service line was shut off.

Precautionary gas level testing was done by the HFD, Westphalia and Avoca Fire Departments, Shelby County Sheriff's Office and Iowa State Patrol to determine when residents could safely return to their home or business.

During this time the Emergency Management team arranged for Veterans Memorial building for residents and pets to take cover until they could return home. Residents were also asked to take keys to the Vets Building to assist the teams in performing gas level testing in the area.

HMU Gas Superintendent, Colburn Warner stated that "This was the largest gas leak I've been a part of. We appreciate the fast response from the Harlan Fire Department and other Emergency Personnel in keeping our employees and the community safe so we could focus on fixing the leak.

HMU CEO Joe Rueschenberg would like to thank the HMU Employees, HFD, Westphalia and Avoca Fire Departments, Shelby County Sheriff's Office, Iowa State Patrol, Shelby Co. Emergency Management, City of Harlan crews and local contractors that offered assistance, equipment and support.

Every July, HMU performs a Gas Leak Survey (Testing) in the Downtown area (4<sup>th</sup> Street to 8<sup>th</sup> Street and Hill Street to Durant Street). No leaks were detected at that time.

We highly encourage citizens to sign up for the Alert Iowa notifications for time sensitive information that affects the area you live. You can request to receive notification via phone call, text, email or all of the above. You will only get notifications that affect you according to the address you register with. So just because your neighbor gets a notification doesn't mean that you will. The Alert Iowa system sends out reminders every 6 months to update your information. Sign up at <https://smart911.com>.

HMU also posts on our Facebook page as a convenience for those that use social media but the Alert Iowa system should be your first resource in an emergency situation such as this one.

As always if you smell gas please call 712-755-5182 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you feel dizzy, lightheaded or nauseous, due to a gas leak or carbon monoxide leak please seek medical attention.