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John B. Rhodes, Chair

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**18107/18-G-0716**

**National Grid Faces Potential Financial Penalty Enforcement Action**  
— Alleged Failures Related to Residential Natural Gas Explosion —

**ALBANY** — The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today ordered National Grid to explain why the Commission should not commence a penalty action against the company for alleged violations of the Commission’s gas safety regulations that led to a natural gas explosion that injured three people and damaged several homes in Little Falls, Herkimer County earlier this year. If National Grid fails to adequately respond to the allegations gas safety investigators have confirmed, staff will ask the Commission to commence a penalty action.

**HOLDING QUOTE:** “Staff’s investigation presented credible information to warrant the Commission requiring National Grid to formally respond to the investigation’s findings,” **Commission Chair John B. Rhodes said.** “This Commission has zero tolerance for violations of its rigorous gas safety standards. We will hold utilities strictly accountable when they do not comply with our gas safety rules, designed specifically to protect life and property.”

On February 14, 2018, a natural gas explosion and resulting fire occurred at 383 W. Main Street in Little Falls, Herkimer County. The explosion resulted from an unintended release and accumulation of natural gas, which had apparently migrated into the basement. Three people sustained minor injuries because of this incident and 383 W. Main Street. In addition, several other neighboring properties were destroyed.

The Department Staff’s investigation identified the cause to be a buried gas service line, which pulled away from the curb shut-off valve most likely allowing natural gas to enter the building through an unsealed hole in the foundation where the service line enters the building. A sealant in the hole where the service line entered the building, which is required, could have prevented the gas migration into the building.

As part of their investigation, staff identified three potential violations of the Commission’s gas safety rules: failure to seal the foundation wall to prevent leakage into the building; failure to ensure that individuals performing covered tasks are qualified; and failure to ensure that individuals performing covered tasks have the necessary knowledge and skills to perform the tasks in a manner that ensures the safe operation of pipeline facilities.

National Grid has 45 days to respond to the Commission’s order. In its response, the company is required to demonstrate why a penalty action should not be commenced against National Grid and, thereafter, a penalty assessed against it for the alleged failures to comply with regulations.

Today's decision may be obtained by going to the Commission Documents section of the Commission's Web site at [www.dps.ny.gov](http://www.dps.ny.gov) and entering Case Number 18-G-0716 in the input box labeled "Search for Case/Matter Number". Many libraries offer free Internet access. Commission documents may also be obtained from the Commission's Files Office, 14th floor, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223 (518-474-2500). If you have difficulty understanding English, please call us at 1-800-342-3377 for free language assistance services regarding this press release.