

# CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

Offered by Councillor Charles C. Yancey and Salvatore LaMattina

## Regarding Emergency Gas Valve Shut-off

- Whereas,** On October 28, 2006 the Boston Globe reported that thousands of emergency gas shut-off valves are inaccessible; and
- Whereas,** emergency gas shut-off valves are crucial safety features required by the state to stop the flow of explosive gas to homes and businesses during emergencies; and
- Whereas,** many of these valves may have been paved over or blocked by other means; and
- Whereas,** the Boston Globe further reports that service valves, which control gas flowing to individual buildings, are the ones most often buried or blocked; and
- Whereas,** those valves, typically contained in boxes embedded in streets and sidewalks, are considered an important stop gap during large fires that could be fueled further by gas; and
- Whereas,** While most houses have shut-off valves at the meter, those valves can be difficult to get to during a fire and do not prevent additional gas from the street from feeding a blaze; and
- Whereas,** "It is extremely important to expedite the shutting off of gas," state Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan said. "Any delay in securing a gas supply line is a potential hazard to firefighters and area residents." and
- Whereas,** Gas companies are required by federal and state regulations to ensure that all shut-off valves are readily accessible, and the State Department of Telecommunications and Energy is responsible for enforcing the regulations; and
- Whereas,** Inaccessibility to valves has been cited for causing delayed gas shut-off after at least two tragedies in recent years -- an explosion in Weston last year that leveled a house and another in Hopkinton in 2002 in which two children were killed. Fire specialists stated that blocked valves are putting lives at risk; and
- Whereas,** The Department of Telecommunications and Energy says it has focused its past enforcement efforts on "critical valves," which control gas flow to large numbers of buildings on a street or streets. Those valves are inspected once a year; and
- Whereas,** Gas providers also say that municipalities should share part of the blame for the service valves being paved over and should keep gas companies abreast about paving projects; and
- Whereas,** The City of Boston has experienced gas explosions which has caused serious damage, injury and even death; therefore be it
- Ordered,** That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council convene an hearing to determine what steps have been taken to correct this problem before a tragedy caused by the inaccessibility of emergency gas shut off valves occurs in Boston, and be it furthered
- Ordered,** that the Boston Fire Department, Boston Public Works Department, Boston Inspectional Services Department, the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Energy, the Massachusetts Fire Marshall, the Massachusetts Department of Public Works, Keyspan, Street Repair Contractors, and the general public are invited to testify.

**In City Council  
February 3, 2010**