

Members of the Committee,

Thank you for your commitment to workplace and worker safety by holding this hearing. I am Edward Badamo, Fire Chief for the South Fire District and I will testify my role and the role of the District in the Kleen energy incident. The Kleen Energy plant is not the first power plant to be located within the South Fire District, NRG is actually located right down the street. However, this is the first to be fed primarily by natural gas fed through the Algonquin Pipeline. Although NRG has a gas feed, it does not run its turbines by Natural Gas.

Prior to the date of the explosion, the plant construction from our perspective was moving forward without any fire code concerns. Although we were involved in the building and inspection process, through plan review and site visits, we held no regulatory authority over the gas blow procedure. The only issue that we dealt with during the construction was early on due to the blasting because this plant is being built on a Feldspar Rock quarry and there was localized damage done to some homes.

The role of the South Fire District on the day of the blast sounds relatively simple, but was complicated due to the processes that existed on the site. I will be brief, but our initial efforts were to rescue the injured workers. While the firefighters were performing their primary searches, the command post was attempting to ascertain from the various trades an accountability of who was on site and if they were not accounted for, where they were so we could direct crews to that area. This was extremely difficult and took nearly a day and a half before we were able to confidently say that everyone was accounted for. During this time we attempted to control the power and ensure that the gas to the building was secured. We also had a fire in the rear of the building that was also being controlled. Between the on-site work and the coverage for the remainder of the city, the incident required the efforts of 18 fire departments, 8 ambulance services, 6 police departments, 6 Emergency Management Agencies, 16 Community Emergency Response Teams, the American Red Cross, the Salvation army, and several other supporting agencies.

There were a lot of resources utilized that day from a fire-rescue perspective that were made possible through the various grant funding projects. The Connecticut Urban Search and Rescue Team which is not federally recognized was called to the scene and the local decontamination unit was also sent, both of these are funded through Homeland security funds. There were interoperable communications brought to the site which were funded through the Public Safety Interoperability Communications grant. Our local Emergency Management Director, the Community Emergency Response teams, and the Incident management teams have never operated at a duration incident of this length, complexity or magnitude. These are funded through the Emergency Management Performance Grant. None of these roles or functions would have been easily completed without you supporting these grants. The sustainment of

these programs as well as the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program in the future is critical especially to a small fire department like ours with limited local resources.

Over the twenty eight days that the fire department spent on the site for safety, we were confronted with new challenges on a daily basis. From the development of procedures for the evacuation of the remaining pressurized gas in the pipe, to the removal of damaged gas cylinders, to the falling debris hampering the investigations, to the coordination of all of the various agencies involved, every day was a learning experience.

The gas blows themselves are not regulated by the fire department and according to NFPA 54, power plants are exempted from the regulation. NFPA 54 also only regulates piping up to 125 psi. The day of the blast they were using over 600 psi. Connecticut adopted NFPA 54 into its Connecticut State Fire Safety Code. While we were advised of the schedule of the blows and our fire marshal was explained the safety process out of courtesy, we made no operational changes for them. The day of the explosion was actually the second day of gas blows. They did some the weekend prior, and several on that day prior to the explosion.

Since the investigation is ongoing, I am not going to make reference to specific gas related procedures that should be followed for the future. I would recommend that the process involve a regulatory authority in one form or another. Whether it is as simple as a requirement that the company submit its safety form to an agency for review and then the procedures are reviewed by a third party. That process can obviously be expanded to include pre-blow inspections and have an on-site component during the blows. But more importantly and regardless of the changes made to any of the regulations, the safety of workers on these types of sites needs to be ensured. I feel that the Governors Commission led by Judge Nevas has made some excellent recommendations that will work towards ensuring worker safety.

I would also ask that the committee investigate and include in any changes made that large multi-trade sites become required to utilize some type of credentialing and accountability system for anyone working or visiting the site. This would have made our on scene rescue efforts much easier, rather than working through a day and a half of interviews and searching before accounting for everyone.

Finally, I would ask that the legislators not only continue to support grant funds for emergency services, but that you look into establishing a fund to help support the local agencies that are affected by incidents such as this. In this case we were able to successfully seek restitution from the company, but if we were not able to or were not successful, this would have greatly reduced the department's funds and ability to operate.

Although the families and workers that were killed or injured during this disaster are never really going to recover from the events of February 7<sup>th</sup>, it is important to determine the cause of the blast and come up with solutions so a tragedy such as this never happens again.

Again thank you for your efforts.