

INTRODUCTION TO AN ACT TO ENSURE GAS SAFETY AND CONSUMER FAIRNESS

The gas infrastructure in Massachusetts is notably prone to leaking due to its old age. Gas leaking from century old cast iron pipes presents a constant threat to the safety of the Commonwealth residents. There are more than 16,000 leaks statewide. Explosions due to leaks, regularly occur across the state. Gas leaks are a healthy and safety threat and cause damage to public and private property, including trees.

Utilities pass the cost of leaked gas to ratepayers: these costs were estimated at \$135 million in Massachusetts (*2013 Sen. Markey study*). In 2015, a subsequent study estimated a value of \$90 million in Boston alone (*2015 Harvard / Boston University study*)

Since the passage of the [2014 Act Relative to Natural Gas Leaks](#), leaks in the state have not been significantly reduced and ratepayers still pay for lost gas

The 2016 [Act to Promote Energy Diversity](#) directs the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) to close environmentally significant gas leaks.

In 2018, Governor Baker signed [An Act to Advance Clean Energy](#), which includes (Section 19) a directive for the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) **to promulgate regulations requiring all gas companies to report to the Department, in a uniform manner, lost and unaccounted-for gas for each year.**

Massachusetts [House H. 2848](#): “An Act to Ensure Gas Safety and Consumer Protection” proposes to amend several sections of the [Chapter 164 \(Manufacture and Sale of Gas and Electricity\) of the 2016 General Laws](#) to expedite the intervention of the public utilities to address and repair leak to improve consumer safety as well prevent damage to properties, including trees. Some of these amendments demand that:

- a gas company notify the fire department and chief law enforcement officer in each city or town where a Grade 3 leak is identified within an hour of detection of such leak.
- that a gas company survey pipelines in every school zone at least once every 12 months or during the next scheduled survey, whichever is sooner.
- a municipality or person whose property has been damaged by a gas company can submit a claim for such damages
- a better coordination of work and sharing of critical information is established between public utilities, the Department of Public Utilities and municipalities;

[HEET](#) has made the invisible visible by providing gas leaks maps of nearly every Massachusetts community served by a gas company. **A map of Somerville’s history of gas leaks as well as may be found here: [Somerville](#).**

Thanks for passing a resolution in supporting the Act to Ensure Gas Safety and Consumer Fairness

In January 2019, DPU promulgated gas leaks regulation [220 CMR 114 'Uniform Natural Gas Leaks Classification'](#) establishing

- (a) uniform natural gas leaks classification;
- (b) requirements for undertaking projects in a public way;
- (c) prioritization of projects located within a School Zone;
- (d) reporting requirements
- (e) the repair and elimination of environmentally significant Grade 3 leaks.