



## **Fire Safety Education & Training Area**

City Utilities of Springfield operates a natural gas transmission and distribution system serving over 80,000 customers. During its 64 years of operation, the gas system has maintained an admirable safety record, largely due to the culture of safety that has been encouraged for years. In the 1980's, the Gas Department Manager envisioned a Fire Training Site for use by both City Utilities and neighboring fire departments. This vision became a reality in 1987, and since that time, hundreds of gas workers and fire department personnel have received hands-on training in fighting live natural gas fires.

This fire training site serves multiple counties and remains one of the few in the region. As a result, we have partnered with numerous gas companies and neighboring fire departments to take advantage of this facility. With years of steady use has come the need for replacement of some items, as well as the need for some updating. Our grant application specifically includes:

- Replacement of 30 fire extinguishers, some dating from the 1980's
- Purchase of 10 sets of fire coveralls and helmets, for protection of those being trained
- Paving of part of the site where vegetation intrusion has resulted in expensive maintenance (repeated graveling) and potential safety issues
- Repainting of above-grade piping, along with maintenance of valves and regulators.

The investments listed above will help ensure that our gas system employees, other gas companies' employees, and various local fire department personnel will continue to receive this vital training safely, as partners with the goal of protecting the safety of those in the communities we serve.

Additionally, City Utilities proposes to add a Leak Training Area at the same location as the Fire Training Site. City Utilities leak surveys every gas main and service in the system a minimum of once every three years; mains and services at greater risk are surveyed more frequently. With the ever-changing workforce, training employees in this all-important task is critical. Unfortunately, training dollars are elusive, and the nearest leak training facility is in Illinois.

Construction of this facility will greatly increase access to leak survey and leak pinpointing training, not only for our own employees, but for other gas companies as

well. Since the Leak Training Area would be adjacent to the Fire Training Site, it will allow area firefighters to add leak training to their arsenal of safety training, since they would be onsite for fire training anyway.

The Leak Training Area would be constructed in such a way that all buried piping would have locator wires. Doing this would allow the site to perform a dual purpose as an underground line locating training facility. This would be of particular benefit to our local utility contracting company, SM&P, as their employees learn how City Utilities installs its facilities, and how they can be located.

The grant application specifically includes:

- The construction of two small buildings, so that training could encompass indoor and underground gas leaks
- A stove in one of the buildings, to train on typical appliance leakage
- A field of underground piping with known leak locations, making it possible to determine how well the trainee is grasping the concept of leak pinpointing
- Installation of a dummy sewer manhole to demonstrate the complex nature of natural gas migration

With the addition of the indoor facilities, the Leak Training Area would be beneficial to more than leak surveyors. Our Customer Service Representatives could receive valuable training in a safe, controlled environment.

City Utilities remains committed to maintaining the safety of the public we serve and the safety of our employees providing that service. We further commit to working together with our partners in public safety, whether they be neighboring gas companies or neighboring fire departments, so that the safety of our communities can extend far beyond limits of our own service area. Investing in these training facilities will be a step in that direction.