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Methane Gas Forces Evacuation

Auburn, Wash. - November 4, 2016- 16 homes were evacuated shortly before 4:00 am, while firefighters from the Valley Regional Fire Authority investigated the source of methane gas that had been detected in the area of SE 133 Ave. SE and SE 310 Street.

The methane gas was first detected by Puget Sound Energy the previous evening while doing normal soil sampling in the neighborhood. After discovering the gas, PSE did further sampling and determined that the soil contamination was on more than one residential property.

Standard protocol for PSE when detecting gas that is not part of their system is to call 911. In addition to VRFA, hazardous materials teams from the Kent RFA, Renton RFA, South King Fire and Rescue, and the Port of Seattle responded to the incident.

The homes were evacuated as a precaution until the source and extent of the methane gas could be determined. The gas is potentially explosive when it reaches high levels and finds an ignition source.

Air monitoring of the 16 homes and properties found that the methane gas levels were very low, and the families were allowed to reoccupy their homes. The displaced residents had been waiting on a Metro bus brought in to keep them warm.

No source for the methane was discovered and there were no reported illness from the gas.

The Department of Ecology and the City of Auburn will be notified to continue the investigation.

Information on methane gas:

- Also known as "marsh gas"
- Colorless and odorless
- Lighter than air
- Produced by many things, including decomposition, coal mining, and volcanic activity
- Not poisonous, but dangerous in low oxygen environments to humans
- Main component of natural gas

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