

KEVIN WINSHIP, TECHNICAL SAFETY MANAGER, CORGI TECHNICAL SERVICES

The Grenfell Inquiry and Gas Safety

At the ASCP Conference, Kevin a leading investigator on gas and gas safety for the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, detailed some of the gas safety issues arising from the Inquiry and the lessons that need to be learned.

Information made public during the Grenfell Inquiry revealed that, at the time of the fire, the Pipeline Isolation Valves (PIVs), which are used to safely externally isolate the gas supply to a building, were not accessible.

It is imperative that landlords, building owners and those with responsibility for multi-occupancy buildings understand that they have legal duties in respect of gas supplies in the building. There should be a nominated person who has the responsibility of fulfilling those legal duties.

Critically, those responsible for building safety must be aware of PIVs and their importance. These valves are used by the network operator to safely externally isolate the gas supply to a building for maintenance, or in the event of an emergency such as a major leak or a fire within the building. This is to make it safer for emergency services to access the building and reduce the likelihood of an explosion whilst repair or rescue operations take place. Information about PIVs and their operation, how they should be protected and identified, and where they are located are covered by the standard IGEM/G/5 Edition 2 Gas in multi-occupancy buildings, under Section 7.3.

As the PIVs were not accessible at Grenfell, this resulted in a significant delay whilst pipelines were located and excavated so they could be manually 'squeezed off' to isolate the supplies. It has emerged through the Inquiry that the gas transporter had known that the PIVs at the Grenfell Tower were 'lost' since September 2016 when they did their last inspection and survey of equipment, however no action was taken to locate these critical safety valves nor to



engage with the duty holder within whose boundary the valves were located.

Whilst it is the network provider who ultimately has the responsibility for inspection, mapping and maintenance of PIVs, it is good practice for duty holders and Gas Safety Managers to identify the location of any of these valves within their boundary. This is to ensure any future works such as road surface work or landscaping does not inadvertently obscure or cover any access points and prevent equipment, skips, storage units and car parking being placed over them. To this end the network operator has a duty to provide information to building duty holders under the Pipeline Safety Regulations 1996.

It is well worth noting, or indeed reminding yourself and your teams that:

- Periodic risk assessments and maintenance of gas installations and pipework are critical and must be carried out by competent qualified personnel, utilising experts where necessary. This may also include an assessment under the Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations 2002 (DSEAR) where appropriate

- It is vital that gas supplies in multi-occupancy buildings can be isolated in an emergency
- PIVs on the supply pipework into a building should be positioned such that they are readily accessible and will not become obstructed during an incident e.g., by falling debris, parked vehicles etc

A valve cover embossed with the word "Gas", or otherwise permanently marked, or secure and permanent wall-mounted labels, are considered suitable methods of identification which are the responsibility of the gas network operator to provide.

A new era of accountability for building safety is coming and it is essential the sector is armed with adequate information, understanding and resource. Staff training will be essential to ensure competency and meet the demands of new legislation.

Should you need immediate advice or support please contact Sam Browne, Client Support Director on sbrowne@corgitechnical.com.

www.corgitechnical.com