

WESFARMERS LTD, GAS LEAK FROM LPG PLANT

314. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Has Wesfarmers LPG provided a report to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in relation to the release of 67 tons of natural gas on 26 May 2000?
- (2) How many fixed gas detectors are located in the Wesfarmers LPG plant?
- (3) Where are they located?
- (4) What type of detectors are in place?
- (5) Has an assessment been made to determine if the gas detectors are -
  - (a) in working order;
  - (b) sufficiently sensitive; and
  - (c) in the appropriate number of locations with respect to the potential sources of emissions?
- (6) If yes to (5), who undertook the assessment?
- (7) Has modelling been undertaken to determine where the gas may have been carried?
- (8) If not, why not?
- (9) If yes to (7), what was the result of this modelling?
- (10) Why did the operator do a normal shut down which took approx 28 minutes, instead of an emergency shut down which would be instantaneous?
- (11) Why did the operator, knowing that he had a faulty shut down valve (SDV 0026), continue to operate the plant?
- (12) How long did the faulty solenoid switch operate before being closed down the second time?
- (13) How is such an amount of natural gas accounted for in relation to greenhouse emissions?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1) Yes. A written report was provided to the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Kwinana Regional Office on 15 June 2000.
- (2) There are 51 hydrocarbon monitors located on the premises, all of which are linked to the digital control system.
- (3)-(4) This information is being sought from Wesfarmers LPG but has not yet been supplied. Upon receipt, I will provide this information direct to the member.
- (5)
  - (a) An assessment of the working order of the detectors is part of the DEP's current investigation. I am advised that regular checks are undertaken as a component of ongoing plant maintenance procedures.
  - (b)-(c) Gas detectors are covered in the Total Hazard and Safety Plan prepared by the company. This was reviewed and accepted by the Department of Minerals and Energy. This will be further investigated by the department as a component of the ongoing investigation into this incident.
- (6) In relation to 5(a), the DEP is undertaking an audit of the gas detector maintenance records as a component of the ongoing investigation into this incident. In relation to 5(b) and (c) above, the Department of Minerals and Energy will undertake the assessment.
- (7) Yes. Preliminary modelling has been undertaken by the DEP, the Department of Minerals and Energy and Wesfarmers LPG in relation to the incident. A range of models and techniques has been used.
- (8) Not applicable.
- (9) The results of modelling vary dependent on the model used and assumptions made. Independent expert advice in relation to modelling is being sought.
- (10) The company advises that during the intervening period between the lifting of the pressure relief valve and initiating the "normal stop" (a period of between 12 and 18 minutes), the operator investigated the cause of the event and options for control. Wesfarmers LPG Pty Ltd advised that the operator, having identified the source of the release and having failed to re-open the shut down valve, initiated a normal shut down.

- (11) Wesfarmers LPG Pty Ltd advised that upon determining that the valve in question was inoperable, the shift controller shut down the plant.
- (12) The company advises that the shut down valve was open for about 60 seconds following operator intervention.
- (13) Methane is not a National Pollution Inventory substance and accordingly does not need to be reported under that program.

In relation to greenhouse gas reporting requirements, the matter of release of this volume of methane would normally be reported to the Federal Government during the annual emission return, if the company is participating in the voluntary Greenhouse Challenge. I am advised that Wesfarmers LPG are not a participant in this program.