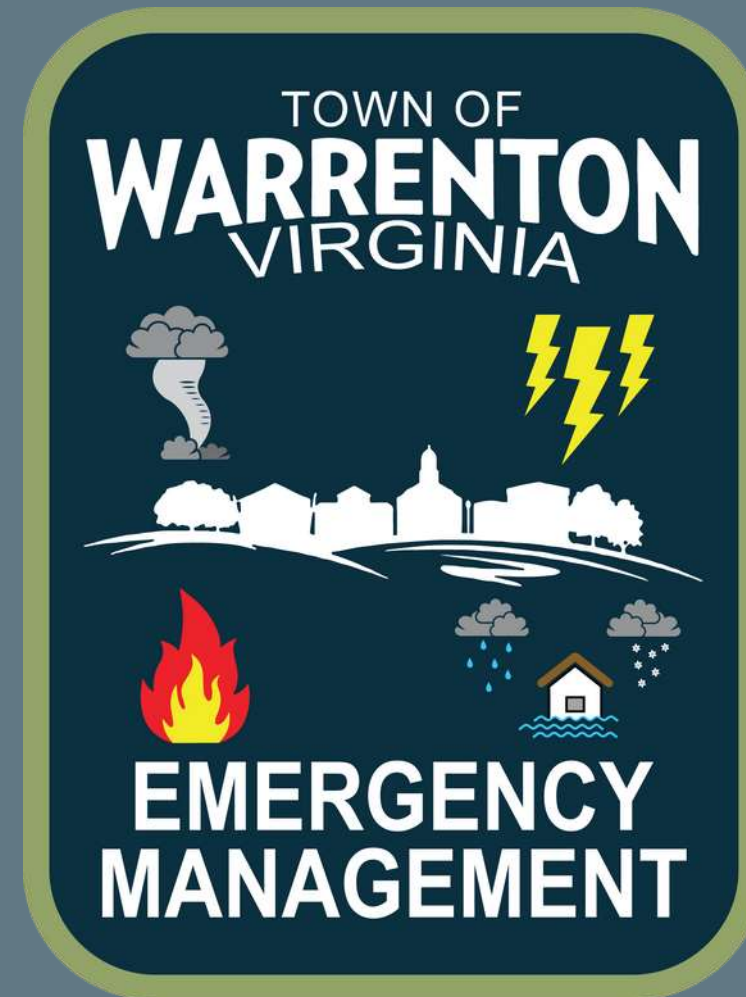




MARCH 5, 2025 NATURAL GAS EMERGENCY

Office of Emergency Management



Mitigation, Preparedness, Response,
and Recovery

INCIDENT OVERVIEW

March 5th, 2025: Natural Gas Emergency

On Wednesday, March 5th, at approximately 11:55 AM, Warrenton, Virginia experienced a natural gas emergency triggered by an over odorization incident. Multiple 911 calls, beginning at 12:55 PM, indicated a widespread strong odor of natural gas throughout the town. In response, the Town Emergency Management Coordinator activated the Emergency Operations Plan, fully activating the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at 1:43 PM. Columbia Gas of Virginia responded to the scene and confirmed the presence of an over-odorization issue, rather than a gas leak. The coordinated response between local emergency services and Columbia Gas mitigated potential risks and ensured public safety. This incident highlights the importance of robust emergency response protocols and effective communication during potential hazardous material events.



TOWN OF
WARRENTON
VIRGINIA

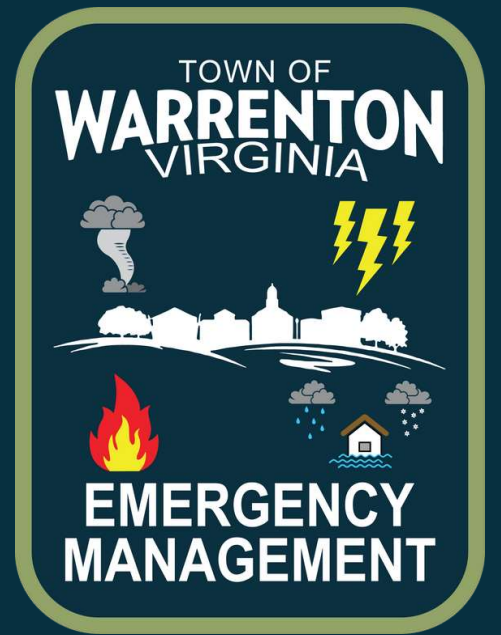


Timeline of Events

- 11:55 AM: Initial reports of strong gas odor.
- 12:55 PM: First 911 call received.
- 1:15 PM: Town EM J. Switzer called Fauquier County EM for assistance.
- 1:26 PM: Town EM contacted Aaron Boeke, VP of Gas Operations, Columbia Gas of VA.
- 1:43 PM: Town EOC fully activated.
- 1:43 PM: Town EM contacted VDEM, Alexa Boggs, CRC.
- 2:00 PM: Situation status: 39 911 calls, public safety system overwhelmed, mutual aid requested, area command established at Warrenton Volunteer Fire Company (WVFC).
- 2:24 PM: Petrina Jones Wroblewski, Columbia Gas of VA, liaison officer, informed Town EM of the mobile command center and emergency operations team en route.
- 2:45 PM: Derek Powell, Columbia Gas EOC Rep., arrived at EOC.
- 3:45 PM: Town press release issued. WIA and EAS out to public with "If you smell Gas, Evacuate, Dial 911" message.
- 4:00 PM: 76 911 calls received.
- 4:24 PM: Columbia Gas Mobile Command Center arrives.
- 4:25 PM: EOC transitioned to Town/County Full EOC activation.
- 4:34 PM: Town EM hotline updated with emergency alert message.
- 4:36 PM: Joint Town/County PIO message being drafted.
- 4:39 PM: Risk Management reports facility checks complete.
- 5:10 PM: First flaring site established at Fauquier High School.
- 5:28 PM: Main Street reopened.
- 5:45 PM: Columbia Gas suspected excessive mercaptan in the system, activated emergency response plans, and initiated flaring operations.
- 5:52 PM: EOC reduced to essential personnel.
- 6:01 PM: 410 Holiday Court and 674 Hastings Lane are identified as additional flaring sites; flaring begins at Fauquier High.
- 6:03 PM: Second flaring location at 674 Hastings Lane begins.
- 6:10 PM: Columbia Gas update: 176 active priority response tickets, 60 completed, prioritizing hospitals, healthcare, and schools.
- 6:21 PM: EOC reduced to minimum staffing.
- 7:05 PM: Flaring operations begin.
- 7:20 PM: Hotwash discussion with EOC staff.
- 9:22 PM: Final update sent for the night.
- Post 9:22 PM: Over 300 911 calls received. Area command at WVFC demobilized. EOC status moved to yellow / virtual.

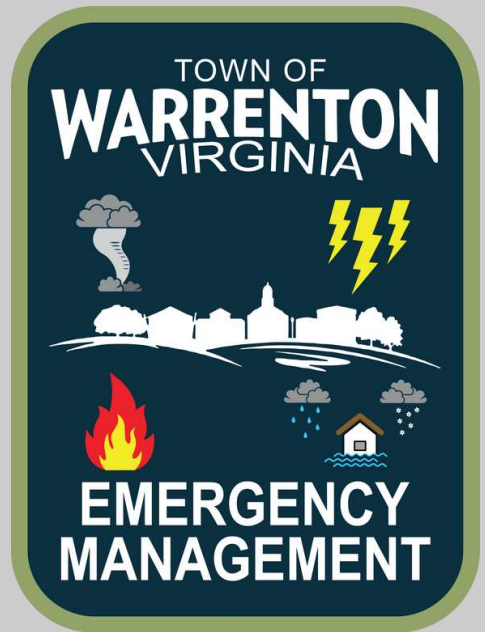
Response and Recovery Efforts

- EOC activation and coordination.
- Public safety response and mutual aid.
- Communication strategies (press releases, alerts).
- Columbia Gas response and mitigation efforts.
 - Flaring operations and site selection.
 - Public safety and resident support.



Alignment with

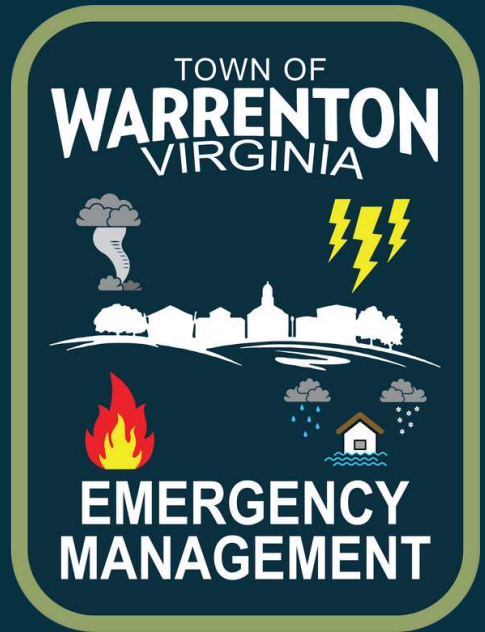
Warrenton Plan 2040



- **Community Safety & Resilience:** Enhanced emergency response capabilities.
- **Intergovernmental Partnerships:** Strong collaboration with Fauquier County and VDEM.
- **Resource Management:** Efficient use of resources during the emergency.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Identifying areas for improvement in emergency response plans.

Staff

Recommendations



1. Joint After-Action Review (AAR):

Collaborative review with Fauquier County.

Identify areas for improvement.

Enhance interagency coordination.

2. VDEM Interagency Agreement:

Streamline resource requests during emergencies.

Enhance overall emergency preparedness.

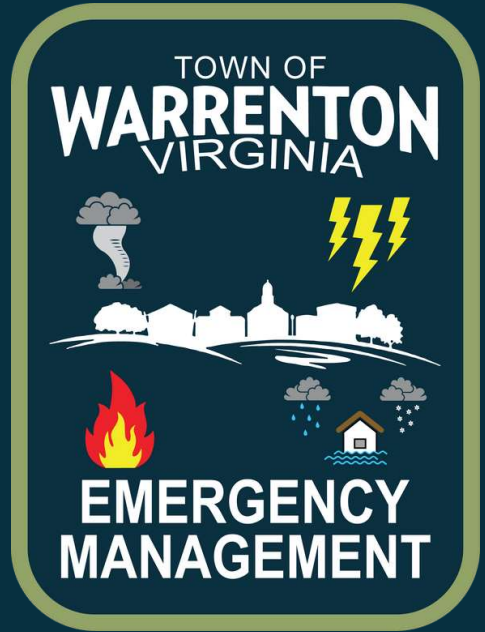
3. Full Reimbursement from Columbia Gas of Virginia:

Recover costs incurred by the Town.

Ensure fiscal responsibility.

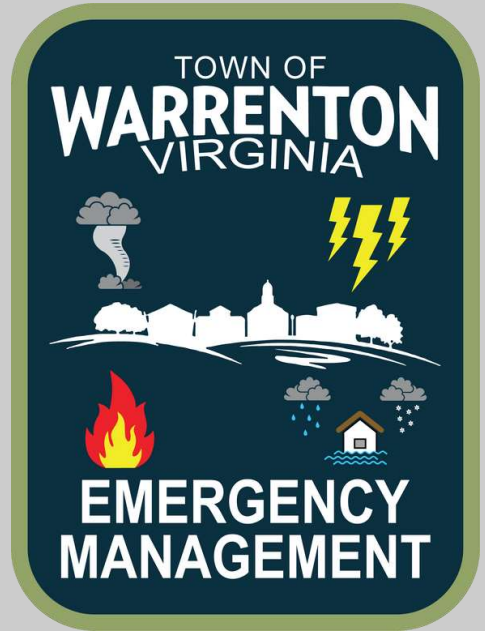
Hold Columbia Gas accountable.

Legal Impact



- The Town incurred significant costs (personnel, equipment, etc.).
- Right to seek reimbursement from Columbia Gas.
- Potential for legal action if reimbursement agreement cannot be reached.
- Focus on demonstrating Columbia Gas's responsibility.

Conculsion



Key Takeaways:

- Successful response to a significant emergency.
- Importance of interagency collaboration.
- Need for continuous improvement in emergency preparedness.
- Commitment to protecting public health and safety.

Next Steps



- Implement AAR recommendations.
- Secure VDEM interagency agreement.
- Pursue full reimbursement from Columbia Gas.

**Representative from
Columbia Gas of Virginia**

