

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,  
RANKING MEMBER

SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE, FOREIGN  
OPERATIONS, AND RELATED PROGRAMS,  
RANKING MEMBER



**Nita M. Lowey**  
**Congress of the United States**  
**17th District, New York**

March 14, 2014

lowey.house.gov

**WASHINGTON**

2365 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-6506  
FAX: (202) 225-0546

**WESTCHESTER**

222 MAMARONECK AVENUE  
SUITE 312  
WHITE PLAINS, NY 10605  
(914) 428-1707  
FAX: (914) 328-1505

**ROCKLAND**

67 NORTH MAIN STREET  
SUITE 101  
NEW CITY, NY 10956  
(845) 639-3485  
FAX: (845) 634-4079

Mr. John McAvoy  
President and Chief Executive Officer, Con Edison  
Cooper Station  
P.O. Box 138  
New York, NY 10276

Mr. Timothy P. Cawley  
President and Chief Executive Officer, Orange & Rockland Utilities  
390 W. Route 59  
Spring Valley, NY 10977

Dear Mr. McAvoy and Mr. Cawley:

In light of the fatal explosion in New York City and yesterday's evacuations in Haverstraw, I am particularly alarmed to learn that it can take longer than six months for a reported gas leak to be repaired.

On February 24, my constituent Julie Kirshner, of Harrison, contacted me about a gas leak in the Park Ridge neighborhood. According to Ms. Kirshner, she noticed a gas odor when she moved to the neighborhood in August. She and at least one neighbor alerted Con Edison, which sent a crew to investigate but did not fix the leak.

My staff contacted Con Ed and was informed that the leak was deemed a "Type 3," the least serious in its classification system, and that it would be fixed within six months, sooner if it worsened. There is no such thing as a safe leak. Ms. Kirshner is living in fear.

The March 12 explosion in East Harlem claimed eight lives and caused dozens of injuries. Yesterday, 35 of my constituents in Rockland County were evacuated from their building at Harbors at Haverstraw when a contractor hit a gas main. O&R and local authorities capped the leak. I applaud the response and am aware that response times in Rockland are improving. However, two years ago a natural gas explosion at a home in West Haverstraw injured two firefighters and an O&R employee, and last June an explosion at Nyack College resulted in the injury of two students and a police officer. We must work harder to prevent leaks from developing into explosions.

While utilities must prioritize the greatest threats to our communities, the goal must be to eliminate and prevent any dangers to the health and safety of local residents quickly. In the interest of public safety, I hope that your companies will aggressively and urgently assess what more you can do to reduce the risk of gas leaks through training, consumer education, expedited repairs to known leaks, and any other safety measures you deem appropriate. I will work closely with local utilities, emergency responders, and residents to ensure that all protections possible are in place.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Nita M. Lowey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left and then curves back under the name.

Nita M. Lowey  
Member of Congress