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Flames shoot out from this gas line fire in the 900 block of Copp Road near Strasburg on Tuesday morning. This home is on the east side of Interstate 81. The explosion occurred on the west side of I-81 on land owned by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation. No one was injured in the incident.

'The loudest bang I've ever heard'

Gas line explosion rocks Strasburg area; no one injured

By Alex Bridges

The Northern Virginia Daily

A gas line exploded in Shenandoah County on Tuesday morning, shaking nearby residents who heard the blast.

The explosion occurred around 8:40 a.m. in the area of Battlefield and Copp roads near Strasburg, according to posts on Facebook by the Shenandoah County Department of Fire and Rescue and the Sheriff's Office. The pipeline, owned by TC Energy, was shut off shortly after the blast, preventing flames from spreading. Interstate 81 at the 295 mile marker near Strasburg was shut down for a short time.

TC Energy said in a statement it was working with local authorities to investigate the incident.

The explosion rocked the nearby area and panicked nearby residents. Larry Allamong lives near the explosion site and recalled by phone Tuesday afternoon hearing the blast while working with a friend, Gary Sine, nearby.



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Shenandoah County Fire and Rescue Chief Tim Williams, left, chats with Shenandoah County Sheriff's Office Capt. Glenn Ogle, right, in this field at I-81 and Battlefield Road near Strasburg on Tuesday morning near the scene of a gas line fire.

Explosion

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“... and I have to say it’s the loudest bang I’ve ever heard,” Allamong said. “I’ve never heard anything that loud.”

No injuries have been reported by fire and rescue officials.

“Nobody was hurt. No animals were hurt,” Allamong said. “I can’t find my cat but, you know, I guess he’ll turn up.”

Allamong recalled he thought a plane crashed.

“I’d never heard anything like that before in my life and that was the only thing I could think of that one of them big jetliner was coming down and the ground was shaking and I said ‘I’m gettin’ the hell out of this building,’” Allamong said. “I ran out the front door and Gary was standing out there and I said ‘what’s going on’ and he’s pointing up in the air and he said ‘a gas line exploded’ and ‘look’ and, of course I looked over and it was a big, huge, I mean huge,

ball of flame goin’ up in the air.

“I mean, it was something else, and I said ‘man, my house is up that way,’” Allamong said.

Allamong drove his truck with Sine to his driveway and, at the top, could see the side of the hill burning and heard the fire “roar.”

“It was so loud we could hardly talk to each other, and I told him, I said ‘it’s too hot, can’t go any further than here but my house is still standing,’” Allamong said.

The explosion occurred in a section of the gas transmission line that crosses through land owned by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation. Chief Operating Officer Dan Reinhart said by phone that he had not visited the site but a staff member went and met with officials there.

“My understanding is you can’t really see anything because it’s so hot at the site they can’t get near it yet,” Reinhart said.

Reinhart said he had seen photographs taken

of the site by drones. He said it appeared the blast burned grass and left a crater in an area of open space on the battlefield property.

TC Energy notified the SVBF about the explosion although by then staff knew about the blast, Reinhart said.

The blast may have destroyed any artifacts not yet discovered on the site.

“Well, it’s a preserved battlefield site so it’s never a good thing when you have an explosion because the ground is disturbed and all that heat and anything archaeologically that we could’ve done there is probably ruined now from all that,” Reinhart said.

Tim Williams, fire and rescue chief for Shenandoah County, referred media requests for information about the incident to TC Energy. No one with the fire department would provide information such as which fire and rescue companies responded to the scene.

TC Energy released a statement about the incident on its website:

“At approximately

8:41 a.m., EDT, we detected a pressure drop on our Columbia Gas Transmission Pipeline located alongside Interstate 81 in Strasburg, Virginia. We have since been notified of a fire in the vicinity and are working with local authorities to investigate and respond. TC Energy’s emergency response procedures were activated upon notification. No injuries have been reported and we are currently assessing the impacts. As a precaution, the pipeline section has been isolated. The safety of our people, communities and protection of the environment are our primary focus. We will continue to provide updates as they become available.”

TC Energy issued an updated statement in the afternoon:

“TC Energy continues to respond to an incident on our Columbia Gas Transmission Pipeline located alongside Interstate 81 in Strasburg, Virginia.

Thanks to the assistance of local first responders, agencies and our crews, the fire along the Columbia Gas Trans-



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Larry Allamong looks outside the window of a pickup truck he was riding in Tuesday. The gas explosion occurred on a property neighboring his.

mission Pipeline corridor near Strasburg, Virginia, has been extinguished. We continue to work with local authorities and have established an approximately 1,650-foot response radius to ensure the safety of the local community and to support our response efforts; we are asking that the public avoid the area until further notice.

There remain no reported injuries to our workers or members of the public.

The section of the im-

acted pipeline remains shut down, and we continue to work with customers who are impacted, including notification of a Force Majeure event.

Our primary focus is the safety of our people and communities and protecting the environment. We are continuing to gather information, assess the effects, and provide updates as they become available.”

— Contact Alex Bridges at abridges@nvdaily.com