

Fire Department orders fuel line tested

By JIM HUGHES
Advance Staff Writer

The Fire Department yesterday ordered the owner of a ruptured pipeline that spewed 35,000 gallons of gasoline in Willowbrook Monday to conduct a pressure test of the line before fuel is again pumped through it, a department official said.

Deputy Fire Commissioner John Mulligan said fire officials met for several hours in Brooklyn with representatives of the owner, Buckeye Pipe Line Co., and also instructed them to submit a preliminary report on their version of the incident within "the next few days." A separate Fire Department probe is already under way.

Meanwhile, weary, rain-soaked work crews finished a massive cleanup of the mess that erupted after a backhoe knocked off a valve on the pipeline, which carries high-octane gasoline from Linden, N.J., to LaGuardia and Kennedy International Airports in Queens.

Samuel Friedman, a spokesman for the city Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), said the clean-up was considered "a huge success" because workers were able to recover most of the gas that surfaced in Willowbrook — where it forced the evacuation of 40 residents — and in Travis.

The accident Monday morning sent a 60-foot geyser of gas into the air and forced more than 200 firefighters and other officials to scramble about for hours, coating the explosive gas with a flame-retardant foam and cordoning off a two-mile long stretch of Victory Boulevard in Willowbrook.

Mulligan said Buckeye is "on notice" that the incident is still under investigation. However, he

said the company has not been accused of any negligence, Mulligan said.

Buckeye is already paying for the entire cleanup effort, although a company spokesman, Jim Kelly, said yesterday he could not estimate how much the cleanup would cost. He said the company planned on paying the Fire Department for the foam, and would also conduct soil tests on the ground near the spill.

The backhoe that caused the accident was being operated by a contracting firm hired by Buckeye to excavate the pipeline to allow repairs.

During a telephone interview from Buckeye headquarters in Linden, N.J., Kelly identified the contractor as UUP (United Utility Pipeline), a Bloomfield-based firm. He said UUP has done work for Buckeye for many years.

UUP officials could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Ted Nabavi, a DEP hazardous material specialist, said Buckeye workers had replaced a broken pipe valve on the pipeline by about 11 a.m. yesterday.

While fire and Buckeye offi-

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