

Questions Grow Over Elgin Home Explosion

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By Lilia Chacon, FOX Chicago News

Chicago - A gas leak in Elgin caused a home to explode, injuring 7 people and raising questions about liability.

The house at 708 Elma **exploded and then burned** all the way down to the basement. Elgin fire crews will stay at the scene for the next several days, making sure the debris doesn't re-ignite, but some questions are beginning to smolder about how the gas leak was handled.

"The utility is supposed to have rock-solid procedures for investigating gas leaks," said Jim Chilsen, of the Citizens Utility Board.

The 911 call came in at 5:23 p.m.: a possible gas leak. Eighteen minutes later a Nicor crew arrived at 710 Elma, next door to the house that burned.

For more than three hours they tried to find the source of the leak, at one point calling for backup. They could not find the source and they could not turn it off. At 8:54 p.m., the home at 708 Elma blew up.

Firefighters had to let it burn to the ground because the gas was still on.

At 12:15 in the morning, crews finally shut the valve.

Residents wonder why Nicor left them in harm's way for so long, and attorneys say the utility has no immunity from liability.

"It is absolutely incumbent on them to take reasonable steps to ensure that the people who may be in danger are aware of the danger and evacuate the area," said Tim Tomasik , of Clifford Law.

A Nicor spokesman was asked why residents weren't moved. Richard Caragol explained that Nicor crews were still in the process of trying to find the leak when the explosion happened, and that Nicor remains committed to the highest standards of safety.

Two victims remain hospitalized Wednesday.

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