



## Ho-Ho-Kus Fire Department Press Release

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Ho-Ho-Kus Volunteer Fire Department  
52 Sheridan Avenue  
Ho-Ho-Kus, NJ 07423  
Fire Headquarters: 201-444-4888

DATE: March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**CLOSE CALL**

**TREE/WIRE FIRE, SUBSEQUENT UNDERGROUND EXPLOSION**

Date of Incident: March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Time of Dispatch: 09:55

Address: 234 Hollywood Avenue, Ho-Ho-Kus NJ, 07423

Number of Alarms: (1)

Civilian Injuries: (0)

Firefighter Injuries: (0)

Assisting Agencies: Ho-Ho-Kus Police Department, PSE&G Gas & Electric, Ho-Ho-Kus DPW,  
Ho-Ho-Kus OEM

A Brief Overview:

The Ho-Ho-Kus Fire Department received a call from the Ho-Ho-Kus Police Department reporting a tree on fire in the area of 1 Gilbert Road at the intersection of Hollywood Avenue. Lieutenant Dane Policastro (747) arrived on scene, established command and reported a primary service line in contact with a tree creating a small fire. Public Service Electric & Gas were requested to respond to the scene. The command post was established on Hollywood Avenue, a safe distance away from the active fire. While awaiting the arrival of Public Service Electric & Gas, a portion of the tree, which had burned through due to the active fire, fell and with it tore down multiple power lines onto the roadway and on top of a nearby vehicle. The high tension lines began arcing in the roadway and on top of the vehicle which was in close proximity to a nearby structure. Lieutenant Policastro requested all remaining Ho-Ho-Kus fire apparatus to the scene. It was identified that an underground 30" high pressure gas main was directly below the power line arcing on the roadway. At this point Assistant Chief Scott McDermott (740) arrived on scene and assumed command. Moments later, an explosion occurred in the underground sanitary sewer system. This explosion caused two (2) manhole covers to launch into the air approximately 30-40 feet. The manhole

covers were in close proximity to apparatus and first responders. An immediate evacuation of all residences along Hollywood Avenue and Hollywood Place was conducted. Once evacuations were complete all apparatus and members retreated to a further distance. Upon the arrival of PSE&G, readings were taken on the roadway, underground and inside accessible structures to detect for any potentially dangerous gas levels. Subsequently, the arcing wires subsided and the incident was gradually downgraded as gas levels were determined to be safe. PSE&G de-energized power to the area to ensure the safety of area residents and pedestrians. The Fire Department then extinguished the remaining fire and ensured the area was safe. The fire department operated for approximately 7.5 hours.

The cause of the explosion is unconfirmed however believed to be the result of the arcing power line igniting a build-up of either natural gas or methane gas within the sewer piping. It is believed that as the heated gases expanded it created pressure seeking opportunity to vent. The resulting explosion escaped at the weakest point, the manhole covers.

This incident is another stern reminder to the public as well as members of the public safety community that electrical and gas emergencies can quickly advance into potentially deadly situations. Fortunately all area residents and first responders involved in this incident went home safely.

The following link is to a live video of the actual incident courtesy of ABC Eyewitness News NYC:

[https://youtu.be/tmqAP0UID\\_g](https://youtu.be/tmqAP0UID_g)

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