

Preventing the Next Tragedy: Why Natural Gas Safety Matters



West Reading, PA R.M. Palmer Company explosion, March 24, 2023;

Source: NTSB <https://www.nts.gov/investigations/Pages/PLD23LR002.aspx>

A Deadly Wake-Up Call for Natural Gas Safety Reform

On March 24, 2023, a catastrophic natural gas explosion at the R.M. Palmer candy factory in West Reading, Pennsylvania, claimed seven lives, injured ten others, and leveled an entire city block. Employees smelled gas, but without alarms to confirm the danger or clear emergency procedures to follow, they stayed inside. Minutes later, the building exploded.

In April 2025, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) concluded that this tragedy could have been prevented with natural gas alarms and proper evacuation protocols. The Board responded with urgent recommendations to every state:

- **Require natural gas alarms in all buildings using natural gas**
- **Mandate emergency procedures in building codes and workplace safety policies**
- **Increase public awareness of gas leak dangers and prevention**

These reforms are simple, proven, and life-saving. Every state has the opportunity and the responsibility to act before the next disaster strikes.

"Requiring natural gas alarms is a common-sense and much-needed recommendation from the NTSB. They should be required in all buildings and the NTSB's recommendation to the states... is a start to making that a reality. If every structure with gas service had a natural gas alarm, lives could be saved instead of taken."

– Pipeline Safety Trust Executive Director Bill Caram,
April 2025