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## **Union building trades members mobilize for gas line crisis in Merrimack Valley**

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Lawrence, MA The Building Trades Unions are gearing up and heading to Merrimack Valley to intervene in what was the most devastating man-made disaster the region has seen in decades: A series of gas line explosions across Lawrence, Andover and North Andover that resulted in a fatality while leaving thousands of families in the dark without basic utilities, and scared for the future of their hometowns.

Several local unions from the Building and Construction Trades Council, including Plumbers and Gasfitters Local 12, Pipefitters Local 537, and IBEW Local 103 electricians, are organizing their vast and professionally trained rank and file membership to stabilize the situation, performing critical repair work to home residences and businesses throughout the area.

The ready and willing union workforce, approximately, including more than 1,500 members total, will be rushing in to add some serious muscle to the ongoing relief efforts taking place on behalf of the effected Lawrence, Andover and North Andover families. The locals will be working together to repair and reinstall pipes, secure gas lines, and upgrade thousands of gas-powered appliances that were destroyed in the explosions.

“We take a lot of pride in our work. Each time we’re on the job, we’re making sure that local residents are safe and comfortable at home, at work, whatever the case may be. But in cases like this, where there’s a crisis at hand to resolve, we’re that much more motivated to come together and get the job done right as quickly as possible.” said Brian Kelly, business manager, Pipefitters Local 537.

“There’s no other way to do it. These families need their homes back.”

Upwards of 80 explosions sparked dozens of fires in the area between September 13th and 14th, stretching emergency responders thin and causing at one point for 18 fires to be left unattended as officials scrambled to stabilize the situation, in addition to the tragic loss of life experienced by an area family. Thousands of families were forced out of their homes in a mass evacuation, and many returned only to find their homes in shambles and without basic utilities.

The union building trades workers will be working around the clock until safety and normalcy are restored to every home in the Middlesex Valley. Repairs are estimated to require at least 6-12 weeks of rigorous labor.

“Our hearts go out to everyone affected by the crisis in Merrimack Valley, and we’re eager to help however we can. Safety is always our number one priority, and that’s why we take giving our members top-notch training so seriously. We’re 100% committed to making sure that every resident in the area feels secure once again,” said Lou Antonellis, business manager, IBEW Local 103.

“We’re prepared to be there for however long it takes. The goal of course is to be in and out as soon as possible, so everything can go back to normal. But considering such safety issues are at hand, our unions are not taking the matter lightly and we intend to ensure complete safety to the residents we’re working for” said Harry Brett, business manager, Plumbers & Gasfitters Local 12.

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