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You're watching
St. Paul woman describes fleeing her burning home

Updated: 02/02/2010 8:45 PM KSTP.com | [Print](#) | [Email](#)
By: Becky Nahm



St. Paul woman describes fleeing her burning home



The owner of the St. Paul home destroyed in a gas-fueled fire Monday said it's unbelievable that she and a plumber escaped alive.

Trista Meehan returned to the burnt-out frame of her home on Villard Avenue in St. Paul's Highland neighborhood Tuesday.

▶ [Gas-fueled St. Paul fire may be linked to '03 warning](#)

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The home was gutted in a fire that started with an explosion Monday around 11 a.m.

The explosion occurred when the plumber, who was in Meehan's basement working to clear a clogged sewer line, hit a natural gas

line. State investigators believe the gas line was installed through the sewer line when Xcel Energy replaced gas lines in the neighborhood in 1991.

Meehan said, "All of the sudden I smelled gas, and within seconds there was an explosion. It literally blew things to the second level, there was damage immediately. I was very stunned, and he came running up the stairs saying 'get out, get out.'"

The plumber suffered burns on his face. Meehan was unharmed. But she lost her first home and everything inside of it.

Meehan said she could have hit the gas line herself. She and some friends spend eight hours Saturday trying to unclog the sewer line.

"We could have gone through that pipe," said Meehan. "We had 100 feet of snake, we were trying to do it ourselves."

After a similar incident in 2003, Minnesota's Department of Pipeline Safety issued a warning to plumbers and contractors. It read, "Utility lines may have been inadvertently installed through some sewer lines" and could pose a "risk to public safety."

Monday Xcel Energy officials said the company reminds all of its customers once a year to contact the company if property owners plan on clearing their sewer lines. Xcel Energy will inspect the lines at no charge.

Meehan said she only lived in the home for six months and was unaware of the potential danger.

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Pipeline safety officials said older homes that had gas lines re-installed in the last 20 years may be at risk. They don't know how many gas lines run through sewer pipes.

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