

# Courier Post

JUNE 18, 2004

## PSE&G to Repair 2,800 Gas Meters

Public Service Electric & Gas will repair about 2,800 natural gas meters located within three feet of townhouse driveways. It will do so following the settlement of a class-action lawsuit alleging the existing configuration is hazardous. George Barkers of Springwood Village filed the lawsuit after his neighbor's car skidded on ice in her driveway and struck the meter near her home on Feb. 24, 2003. An explosion and ensuing fire destroyed three homes on Carlton lane and damaged more than a dozen others. No one was injured. The suit, later joined by Mt. Laurel Township officials and the State League of Municipalities, called for PSE&G to "correct a highly dangerous condition that threatens the lives of hundreds or thousands of Mount Laurel residents" at no cost to its customers. Under a joint agreement approved by the State Board of Public Utilities, PSE&G will conduct inspections and identify which meters are to be protected. It will install excess flow valves on those meters, which block the flow of gas if the line is ruptured. In some cases, steel posts will be installed or the meters will be relocated. We did recognize that certain of these outdoor gas meter sets could be

protected from potential impact from motor vehicles," said Karen Johnson, a spokes woman for PSE&G. "Right now we're working on the schedule." The company has done some preliminary work and is committed to completing all work in Mount Laurel by Oct. 31, 2005. Improvements to meters in other parts of the state will be finished within three years, according to a work plan PSE&G filed with the state BPU. "They need to install those excess flow valves," said Thomas Pofahl Sr., a Springwood Village resident who keeps a trailer parked in his driveway to block his meter and worries about the safety of his year-old child. "One accident could have taken six homes completely down." Johnson would not comment on whether PSE&G would pay damages to the township, which requests compensation for expenses incurred while fighting the fire and dealing with the aftermath of the explosion. Township solicitor Michael Mouser did not return a call seeking comment Tuesday. "I think it's a good settlement," said **Stephen P. DeNittis, of Shabel and DeNittis** who represents the Barkers and the class.