

**FEB. 22, 2013
TIME: 1:30PM
MEDIA RELEASE**

FOR MORE INFO, CALL PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER
STEVE d'OLIVEIRA AT 954-640-4209 OR 561-523-8198 [C].



A1A NOW OPEN IN BOTH DIRECTIONS

State Road A1A in Lauderdale-By-The-Sea is now open in both directions to traffic.

Southbound A1A near the Sea Watch Restaurant had been closed Friday morning due to a gas leak. The road was re-opened around 11AM. Firefighters cleared the scene after safely burning off the propane gas in a 500-gallon tank that had been abandoned.

The situation was very dangerous.

It took firefighters a while to cap the leak because part of the underground tank was covered with concrete. Firefighters had to use special equipment to break through six inches of concrete without causing any sparks that could potentially ignite the gas. Once the leak was capped, firefighters then began the process of safely burning off the gas.

The tank was located at the Ocean Bay Club, 5555 N. Ocean Drive, Lauderdale-By-The-Sea. It began leaking on Thursday at about 1PM. The Volunteer Fire Department responded to the scene and tried to ascertain which gas company owned the tank.

When that couldn't be determined, the VFD called for HAZMAT back-up units to respond. Firefighters from Broward County, Fort Lauderdale, Sunrise, Pompano Beach and Oakland Park responded to help assist the Town in dealing with the leaking tank.

There was a heavy smell of gas at the condo when the VFD responded to the scene.

Broward County, Fort Lauderdale and Sunrise all sent HAZMAT teams to assist. HAZMAT back-up teams are needed in case the initial team members are injured.

The Broward Sheriff's Office shut down A1A north and south at 8PM on Thursday.

The underground tank was located in the Ocean Bay Club's pool area, where it had been used to heat the pool. It was abandoned when the condo switched to electric.

"The tank should have been emptied and removed," Fire Chief Judson Hopping said.

An estimated two dozen residents from Ocean Bay were evacuated. Several residents who live in homes in the Village of Sea Ranch Lakes were also required to evacuate.

The Ocean Bay Club, a condominium complex, is located on the west side of A1A just south of Assumption Catholic Church.

There were no reported injuries to residents or firefighters.

The incident is now under investigation by the Town Fire Chief and Fire Marshall.