4-10-2013

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UNH Investigates Incident That Left Three Students Burned

DURHAM, N.H. -- In the wake of a hot water pipe break Saturday, April 6, 2013, that left three female students with serious burns to their feet, University of New Hampshire President Mark Huddleston has called for an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the incident.

“I was devastated to learn three of our students suffered serious burns when this pipe failed,” said Huddleston. “The safety of the campus community is our top priority and we need to do everything we can to prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future.”

The inquiry will be led by Paul Dean, executive director of public safety.

Officials found the pipe that delivered hot water to Hunter Hall for the heating system was located under a pipe that delivers hot water for sinks and showers. That pipe, which is several decades old, had been slowly leaking for some time, continuously spraying hot water on the second larger and newer pipe, corroding the exterior and causing premature failure.

The three students, who were burned while exiting the building, were transported to local hospitals and later transferred to Boston hospitals.

Huddleston noted that the university’s facilities staff works hard to keep mechanical systems running effectively and efficiently, and to improve processes that identify emergency issues before they occur. The university periodically employs a leak detection service to inspect water distribution mains, and officials are looking at increasing the frequency of that as well as extending the service to other types of buried services.

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