



WHEN A PIPELINE COMES TO TOWN...

A Readiness Checklist for Community Governing Bodies

The Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) prepared this user-friendly checklist to assist community officials needing to address potential safety concerns related to natural gas pipelines in their communities. These suggested actions have been adapted from recommended practices published by the Pipelines and Informed Planning Alliance (PIPA)*, and other source materials, which rely on three main components that a community can use to plan for pipeline safety – **COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION, and ACTION.**

The following nine checklist items are *recommended minimums* that community elected officials and governing boards can implement to aid their communities in addressing concerns raised by natural gas pipelines. Communities that need assistance with any of these checklist items are encouraged to contact the NRPC for assistance.



Photo taken from DGR News Service (<http://dgrnewsservice.org/kxt/>) Accessed 6/14/16
Image by Daniel Acker/Bloomberg

In addition, many local communities and jurisdictions in the United States have implemented PIPA's more comprehensive land use planning best management practices (BMPs), which establish strategies for towns, property owners, and pipeline operators to safely manage activities and land uses adjacent to or near gas pipelines. New Hampshire law allows for the adoption of zoning and permitting tools that can aid in mitigating safety concerns related to natural gas pipelines. NRPC has produced a companion guide, *Managing Land Use Near a Pipeline with Best Management Practices*, which provides examples and guidance that be utilized by planning board and municipal staff in New Hampshire to further manage potential impacts of pipelines.

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Resources:

U.S. Department of Transportation – Pipeline & Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) www.phmsa.dot.gov

The mission of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration is to protect people and the environment by advancing the safe transportation of energy and other hazardous materials that are essential to our daily lives. PHMSA develops and enforces regulations for the safe operation of the nation's 2.6 million mile pipeline transportation system and the nearly 1 million daily shipments of hazardous materials by land, sea, and air.

Pipelines and Informed Planning Alliance (PIPA) www.PIPA-info.com

The Pipelines and Informed Planning Alliance (PIPA) is a stakeholder initiative led and supported by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA). PIPA's goal is to improve safety for the communities that surround large-diameter, high-pressure transmission pipelines. PIPA works toward this goal by promoting effective communication among stakeholders, raising awareness of pipelines, and sharing recommended practices to reduce pipeline risks to the public.

Common Ground Alliance (CGA) www.commongroundalliance.com

CGA is a member-driven association of 1,700 individuals, organizations and sponsors in every facet of the underground utility industry. Established in 2000, CGA is committed to saving lives and preventing damage to underground infrastructure by promoting effective damage prevention practices.

Pipeline Safety Trust (PST) www.pstrust.org

The Pipeline Safety Trust is a nonprofit public charity promoting pipeline safety through education and advocacy by increasing access to information, and by building partnerships with residents, safety advocates, government, and industry, that result in safer communities and a healthier environment.

Dig Safe System, Inc. www.digsafe.com

Dig Safe® is a member utility-funded call-center that notifies participating utilities of planned excavation in proximity to their underground equipment. Utilities, in turn, mark out the locations of their equipment to be avoided. In New Hampshire, gas, electric, telephone, cable television and public water companies whose rates are regulated by the N.H. Public Utilities Commission, are required to join. Dig Safe is a free service that can be accessed by homeowners and contractors by calling 811 at least 72 hours in advance of digging.

Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) www.nashuarpc.org

Established in 1959, the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) is the oldest of New Hampshire's nine regional planning commissions. Formed by the City of Nashua and the Town of Hudson to address highway congestion and coordinate land use development, that same spirit of regional cooperation and problem-solving characterizes the commission's activities today.

Now serving 13 municipalities, including Nashua and Hudson as well as Amherst, Brookline, Hollis, Litchfield, Lyndeborough, Mason, Merrimack, Milford, Mont Vernon, Pelham, and Wilton, the Commission focuses on developing and implementing innovative planning strategies that preserve and improve the quality of life in Southern New Hampshire.

COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION, & ACTION...

Nine steps* that can be implemented right away by community governing bodies:

- 1. Establish which local department and person to serve as the primary location and contact for pipeline information and any applicable local regulations.**

This department and point person would be the local community contact with the Pipeline Operator and be responsible for disseminating information to affected property owners and the general public through the local media, Town website, and any other local communication channels.

- 2. Have the local point person establish contact with the Pipeline Operator.**

This is critically important as good communication between the Town and the Pipeline Operator is essential in being prepared for potential questions from property owners and in informing the public on pipeline activities when they occur. The Town is more often than not the first place that is contacted and being able to respond knowledgeably avoids potential problems.

- 3. Make sure the Town is on the Pipeline Operator's communications plan/public information/property owner distribution list.**

Pipeline Operators are well-versed in pipeline operations and are likely to have a communications plan utilizing various methods of communication intended to increase pipeline safety awareness. If Town-owned properties are affected by a pipeline the Town should automatically be included on a communications distribution list, and this should be verified and assured. Regardless of whether the pipeline is on Town-owned land, it is important for the Town to receive communications as again, the Town Hall is often the point of first contact for a property owner and the Town should be aware of pipeline activities.

- 4. Obtain the Pipeline Operator's mapping data (either digital or paper copies, or both, depending upon Town capabilities) of the pipeline location within Town, and make available to the public and staff in the appropriate Town department.**

An overall location map of the pipeline can be a useful display in the public lobby of the department serving as the primary contact on pipeline matters.

Depending upon the resources available within the Town, a good suggestion is to develop an 'identifier' on individual property records that indicates the existence of the pipeline on a specific property. For example, if the Building, Assessing, or Planning departments have individual property files, a notation or copy of the pipeline route map could be placed in the file.

*These guidelines have been adapted from:



Pipelines and Informed Planning Alliance. (2010, November). **Partnering to Further Enhance Pipeline Safety In Communities Through Risk-Informed Land Use Planning; Final Report of Recommended Practices.** Retrieved from <http://primis.phmsa.dot.gov/comm/publications/PIPA/PIPA-Report-Final-20101117.pdf>

COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION, & ACTION...

- 5. Obtain a copy of the Pipeline Operator's developer handbook or guidelines and have available for property owners and the general public in the office of the primary contact and on-line on the Town website.**

For example, Kinder Morgan has published a short "Developer Handbook" that explains basic land management guidelines and rights-of-way restrictions and requirements allowing for the company to maintain the safety and integrity of its facilities. Property owners may have a copy, but it is advisable to have a copy handy in the municipal department and a link or copy on the municipal website.

Additionally, if your community determines additional local zoning or site development regulations are warranted, the developer's handbook can be used as a resource for best management practices. See # 9 below for possible regulatory options available to the Town for implementation.

- 6. Have DigSafe (811) information readily available and visible in the Town Hall and contact department, on the Town website, and on community media or cable access channels.**

Educating property owners and contractors on the importance of DigSafe, regardless of whether a pipeline exists on their property or not, is of critical importance. Excavation near a pipeline is a particular risk and property owners must be made aware that it is their responsibility to insure that prior to excavation DigSafe must be notified for on-site underground utility location.

- 7. Appoint a Town enforcement official with the enforcement power and municipal support to legally halt unsafe and dangerous excavation that threatens life or property.**

The Town should obtain a copy of the Pipeline Operator's written procedures that address the need to stop any excavation activity that poses a threat to its pipeline, the property owner, or the general public. In conjunction with this, creating a partnership and good communication with an appointed Town enforcement official is necessary to insure that there is an understanding and set of procedures between the Operator and the Town to be able to immediately cease dangerous excavation. The local enforcement official can be a building official/inspector, code enforcement official, police officer, or fire official.

- 8. Make sure there is a solid emergency preparedness plan in place.**

In the unlikely event that there is a pipeline emergency there must be an established emergency preparedness plan in place that insures efficient and rapid response by first responders who have ongoing training and are supported with the necessary tools and equipment.

- 9. Obtain copies for Town files of pipeline easements for each property impacted by pipeline.**

The pipeline easement is a private agreement between the property owner and the pipeline company and activities that are more restrictive than what your zoning allows are not subject to enforcement unless they are life-threatening. Because the designated Town department is often a point of first contact for a property owner or member of the public (rather than the Pipeline Operator), it is recommended that a copy of each recorded easement be obtained from the Hillsborough County Registry of Deeds and placed in an appropriate Town property file. Having this information on hand in an appropriate and accessible location could provide needed information for the Town when enforcement is required and/or land use activity is proposed.

Communities needing assistance with these checklist items can contact NRPC