

# Important Safety Information

*about safe excavation and digging\**

## PIPELINE SAFETY



*\*Please share this with others in your organization.*

## Call before you dig. IT'S FREE, AND IT'S THE LAW!



Because even relatively minor excavation activities like landscaping or fencing can cause damage to a pipeline, its protective casing and/or buried utility lines, always contact your state One-Call Center before engaging in any excavation, construction, farming or digging. Most states require 48 hours notice to the One-Call Center to allow the utility operators to mark their pipelines and utilities at your proposed digging site. In fact, most serious damage done to pipelines is done when a third party inadvertently excavates, blasts or drills within a pipeline right-of-way. By contacting the One-Call Center first, this type of damage can be prevented. Sometimes pipeline companies will require a representative present to monitor the safe excavation.

One easy phone call to 811 starts the process to get your underground pipelines and utility lines marked for **FREE**. When you call 811 from anywhere in the country, your call will be routed to your state One-Call Center. Once your underground lines have been marked for your project, you will know the approximate location of your pipelines and utility lines, and can dig safely. More information regarding 811 can be found at [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com).

### How would you know where a pipeline is?

Most pipelines are underground, where they are more protected from the elements and minimize interference with surface uses. Even so, pipeline rights-of-way are clearly identified by pipeline markers along pipeline routes that identify the approximate—NOT EXACT—location of the pipeline. Every pipeline marker contains information identifying the company that operates the pipeline, the product transported, and a phone number that should be called in the event of an emergency.

**Markers do not indicate pipeline burial depth, which will vary.** Markers are typically seen where a pipeline intersects a street, highway or railway. For any person to willfully deface, damage, remove, or destroy any pipeline marker is a federal crime.



**Pipeline Marker** — This marker is the most common. It contains operator information, type of product, and an emergency contact number. Size, shape and color may vary.

**Aerial Marker** — These skyward facing markers are used by patrol planes that monitor pipeline routes.

**Casing Vent Marker** — This marker indicates that a pipeline (protected by a steel outer casing) passes beneath a nearby roadway, rail line or other crossing.

### How would you recognize a pipeline leak?

- **Sight:** Liquid pools, discolored or abnormally dry soil/vegetation, continuous bubbling in wet or flooded areas, an oily sheen on water surfaces, and vaporous fogs or blowing dirt around a pipeline area can all be indicative of a pipeline leak. Dead or discolored plants in an otherwise healthy area of vegetation or frozen ground in warm weather are other possible signs. Natural gas is colorless, but vapor and “ground frosting” may be visible at high pressures. A gas leak may also be indicated by bubbles in wet or flooded areas, distinct patches of dead vegetation, dust blowing from a hole in the ground or flames if the leak is ignited.
- **Sound:** Volume can range from a quiet hissing to a loud roar depending on the size of the leak and pipeline system.
- **Smell:** An unusual smell, petroleum odor, or gaseous odor will sometimes accompany pipeline leaks. Natural Gas and Highly Volatile Liquids are colorless, tasteless and odorless unless commercial odorants or Mercaptan is added. Gas transmission/gas gathering pipelines are odorless, but may contain a hydrocarbon smell.

## What to do in the event a leak were to occur:

- **Turn off** any equipment and eliminate any ignition sources without risking injury.
- **Leave the area** by foot immediately. Try to direct any other bystanders to leave the area. Attempt to stay upwind.
- If known, from a safe location, notify the pipeline operator immediately and **call 911** or your local emergency response number. The operator will need your name, your phone number, a brief description of the incident, and the location so the proper response can be initiated.

## What not to do in the event a leak were to occur:

- **DO NOT** cause any open flame or other potential source of ignition such as an electrical switch, vehicle ignition, light a match, etc. Do not start motor vehicles or electrical equipment. Do not ring doorbells to notify others of the leak. Knock with your hand to avoid potential sparks from knockers.
- **DO NOT** come into direct contact with any escaping liquids or gas.
- **DO NOT** drive into a leak or vapor cloud while leaving the area.
- **DO NOT** attempt to operate any pipeline valves yourself. You may inadvertently route more product to the leak or cause a secondary incident.
- **DO NOT** attempt to extinguish a petroleum product or natural gas fire. Wait for local firemen and other professionals trained to deal with such emergencies.

## What to do in case of damaging/disturbing a pipeline

If you cause or witness even minor damage to a pipeline or its protective coating, please immediately notify the pipeline company. Even a small disturbance to a pipeline may cause a future leak. A gouge, scrape, dent or crease is cause enough for the company to inspect the damage and make repairs.

All damages to underground gas or hazardous liquid pipeline facilities in the State of Texas are required by law to be reported to the Railroad Commission of Texas online at [www.rrc.state.tx.us](http://www.rrc.state.tx.us). Excavators must notify the pipeline company through the One-Call Center immediately but no later than two hours following the damage incident.

## Pipeline purpose and reliability

Pipelines are the safest and most efficient means of transporting natural gas and petroleum products, according to National Transportation Safety Board statistics. These pipelines transport the natural gas, which provides about 24 percent of all the energy used in the United States, and over 700 million gallons of petroleum products per day.

In the United States alone, there are over 200,000 miles of petroleum pipelines and 300,000 miles of natural gas transmission pipelines in use every day. Transmission pipelines are typically larger than gathering and distribution lines. They transport energy products across the country and to storage facilities. Compressor stations and pumping stations are located along transmission and gathering pipeline routes and help push energy products through the line.

Local Distribution Companies deliver natural gas to most homes and businesses through underground main and utility service lines. These lines cover over 800,000 miles of underground pipeline in the United States.

Onshore gathering lines are pipelines that transport gas from a current production operation facility to a transmission line or main. Production operations are piping and equipment used in production and preparation for transportation or delivery of hydrocarbon gas and/or liquids.

## What does the pipeline company do if a leak occurs?

To prepare for the event of a leak, pipeline companies regularly communicate, plan and train with local emergency responders. Upon the notification of an incident or leak the pipeline company will immediately dispatch trained personnel to assist emergency responders. Pipeline operators and emergency responders are trained to protect life, property and facilities in the case of an emergency. Pipeline operators will also take steps to minimize the amount of product that leaks out and to isolate the pipeline emergency.

## Maintaining safety and integrity of pipelines

Pipeline operators invest significant time and capital maintaining the quality and integrity of their pipeline systems. Most active pipelines are monitored 24 hours a day via manned control centers. Pipeline companies also utilize aerial surveillance and/or on-ground observers to identify potential dangers. Control center personnel continually monitor the pipeline system and assess changes in pressure and flow. They notify field personnel if there is a possibility of a leak. Automatic shut-off valves are sometimes utilized to isolate a leak.

## What is a right-of-way and can I build or dig on it?

Pipeline companies work diligently to establish written agreements, or easements, with landowners to allow for ease of construction and maintenance when they cross private property. Rights-of-way are often recognizable as corridors that are clear of trees, buildings or other structures except for the pipeline markers. A right-of-way may not have markers clearly present and may only be indicated by cleared corridors of land, except where farm land or crops exist. County Clerk's Offices also have record of easements which are public record.

Encroachments upon the pipeline right-of-way inhibit the pipeline operator's ability to reduce the chance of third-party damage, provide right-of-way surveillance and perform routine maintenance and required federal/state inspections. In order to perform these critical activities, pipeline maintenance personnel must be able to easily and safely access the pipeline right-of-way, as well as areas on either side of the pipeline. Keeping trees, shrubs, buildings, fences, structures and any other encroachments well away from the pipeline ensures that the pipeline integrity and safety are maintained.

For questions concerning the pipeline or right-of-way or about future property improvements or excavations, contact the pipeline operator.

## How can you help?

While accidents pertaining to pipeline facilities are rare, awareness of the location of the pipeline, the potential hazards, and what to do if a leak occurs can help minimize the number of accidents. A leading cause of pipeline incidents is third-party excavation damage. Pipeline operators are responsible for the safety and security of their respective pipelines. To help maintain the integrity of pipelines and their rights-of-way, it is essential that pipeline and facility neighbors protect against unauthorized excavations or other destructive activities. Here's what you can do to help:

- **Become familiar with the pipelines and pipeline facilities in the area (marker signs, fence signs at gated entrances, etc).**
- **Record the operator name, contact information and any pipeline information from nearby marker/facility signs and keep in a permanent location near the telephone.**
- **Be aware of any unusual or suspicious activities or unauthorized excavations taking place within or near the pipeline right-of-way or pipeline facility; report any such activities to the pipeline operator and the local law enforcement.**