

# Public Awareness Programs for Pipeline Operators

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## FOREWORD

This document is a Recommended Practice (RP) for pipeline operators to use in development and management of Public Awareness Programs. Pipeline Operators have conducted Public Awareness Programs with the affected public, government officials, emergency responders and excavators along their routes for many years. The goal of this RP is to establish guidelines for operators on development, implementation, and evaluation of Public Awareness Programs in an effort to raise the effectiveness of Public Awareness Programs throughout the industry.

Representatives from natural gas and liquid petroleum transmission companies, local distribution companies, and gathering systems, together with the respective trade associations, have developed this Recommended Practice. The working group was formed in early 2002. Additionally, representatives from federal and state pipeline regulators have provided input at each step of development and feedback from all interested parties has been solicited through a wide variety of sources and surveys.

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# Public Awareness Programs for Pipeline Operators

## 1 Introduction, Scope and Glossary of Terms

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This Recommended Practice (RP) provides guidance to be used by operators of petroleum liquids and natural gas pipelines to develop and actively manage Public Awareness Programs. This RP will also help to raise the quality of pipeline operators' Public Awareness Programs, establish consistency among such programs throughout the pipeline industry, and provide mechanisms for continuous improvement of the programs. This RP has been developed specifically for pipelines operating in the United States, but may also have use in international settings.

Public awareness and understanding of pipeline operations is vital to the continued safe operation of pipelines. Pipeline operators' Public Awareness Programs are an important factor in establishing communications and providing information necessary to help the public understand that pipelines are the major transportation system for petroleum products and natural gas in the United States, how pipelines function, and the public's responsibilities to help prevent damage to pipelines.

Public Awareness Programs should address the needs of different audiences within the community and be flexible enough to change as the pipeline system changes or as the public's needs for information change. When effectively and consistently managed, a Public Awareness Program can provide significant value to the pipeline operator in several areas: enhanced public safety, improved pipeline safety and environmental performance, building trust and better relationships with the public along the pipeline route, less resistance to pipeline maintenance and right-of-way activities, preservation of rights-of-way, enhanced emergency response coordination, and improved pipeline operator reputation.

Public awareness messages need to provide a broad overview of how pipelines operate, the hazards that may result from activity in close proximity to pipelines and those hazards possible due to pipeline operations, and the measures undertaken to prevent impact to public safety, property or the environment. These messages should be coupled with information regarding how pipeline operators prepare for emergencies in a way that minimizes the consequences of a pipeline incident.

This RP identifies for the pipeline operator four specific stakeholder audiences and associated public outreach messages and communication methods to choose from in developing and managing a successful Public Awareness Program. It also provides information to assist operators in establishing

specific plans for public awareness that can be evaluated and updated.

This RP is comprised of a main body (Sections 1 – 8), and Appendices. The main body of this document contains the general, baseline program recommendations and the supplemental program components. Summary tables and diagrams are also provided in the main body. These summaries can be used as quick reference guides to assist operators when customizing their Public Awareness Programs to reflect the unique characteristics of their pipeline and facilities. The Appendices provide operators with additional, optional information and resources for further reference. The Appendices repeat many areas of the main body in order to provide the operator with comprehensive information.

### 1.2 SCOPE

This RP is intended as a resource that can assist pipeline operators in their public awareness efforts. Operators are urged to develop, implement and actively manage Public Awareness Programs within their companies. In implementing these programs, operators should select the most appropriate mix of audiences, message types, and delivery methods and frequencies, depending on their needs and the needs of the communities along a given pipeline segment. The guidance set forth in this RP establishes a baseline for Public Awareness Programs and describes considerations for program expansion that can further enhance specific public awareness outreach.

This RP provides guidance for the following pipeline operators:

- Intrastate and interstate hazardous liquid pipelines
- Intrastate and interstate natural gas transmission pipelines
- Local distribution systems, and
- Gathering systems.

This guidance is intended for use by pipeline operators in developing and implementing Public Awareness Programs associated with the normal operation of existing pipelines. The guidance is not intended to focus on public awareness activities appropriate for new pipeline construction or for communications that occur immediately after a pipeline-related emergency. Communication regarding construction of new pipelines is highly specific to the type of pipeline system, scope of the construction, and the community and state in which the project is located. Likewise, public communications in response to emergency situations are also highly specific to the emergency and location. This RP is also not intended to provide guidance to operators for communications about operator-specific performance measures that are

addressed through other means of communication or regulatory reporting.

The primary audience for this RP is the pipeline operator for use in developing a Public Awareness Program for the following stakeholder audiences:

- The affected public—i.e., residents, and places of congregation (businesses, schools, etc.) along the pipeline and the associated right-of-way (ROW)
- Local and state emergency response and planning agencies—i.e., State and County Emergency Management Agencies (EMA) and Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs)
- Local public officials and governing councils
- Excavators.

## DESCRIPTION OF PIPELINE INFRASTRUCTURE

To clarify the scope of the pipeline industry covered by this RP, a brief description of the affected infrastructure components is provided below. Mainline pipe, pump and compressor stations, and other facilities that are associated with the pipeline should be considered to be included. Unless otherwise noted, the use of the term “pipeline” in this RP will refer to all three of the following types of systems. The RP recognizes some differences between the three pipeline types and provides the operator flexibility based on the needs of the stakeholders along a particular pipeline.

### 1.2.1 Transmission Pipelines

The transmission pipeline systems for liquid petroleum and natural gas, move large amounts of liquids and natural gas from the producing and/or refining locations to local “outlets”, such as bulk storage terminals (for liquids) and natural gas distribution systems. Transmission pipeline systems can be classified as either “intrastate pipelines”, located within one state’s borders, or “interstate pipelines” crossing more than one state’s borders. Natural gas transmission pipelines deliver gas to direct-served customers and local distribution systems’ stations, referred to as “city gates”, where the pressure is lowered for final distribution to end users. Liquids transmission pipelines usually transport crude oil, refined products, or natural gas liquids. Transmission pipelines are generally the middle of the transportation link between gathering and distribution systems.

### 1.2.2 Local Distribution Systems

The local distribution systems for liquid petroleum and natural gas differ because of the nature and use of the products. Liquid petroleum products are distributed from bulk terminals by other modes of transportation, such as by rail cars and tank trucks. Local natural gas distribution companies (LDCs) receive natural gas at “city gates” and distribute it through distribution systems. These consist of “mains”,

which are usually located along or under city streets and smaller service lines that connect to the mains to further distribute natural gas service to the local end users - homes and businesses.

### 1.2.3 Gathering Systems

Gathering pipelines link production areas for both crude oil and natural gas to central collection points. Some gathering systems include processing facilities; others do not. Some gathering systems are regulated by the Office of Pipeline Safety, U.S Department of Transportation, while most are not. Gathering systems connect to transmission pipelines for long distance transportation of crude oil and natural gas to refinery centers and distribution centers, respectively.

## 1.3 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**1.3.1 Appendices:** The Appendices’ role is to provide a pipeline operator with additional information to develop and actively manage its Public Awareness Programs. The Appendices’ mirror the main body of the RP while providing additional information such as: resources and contacts, examples of stakeholder audiences, public awareness messages, enhanced delivery methods and media, and program evaluation information.

**1.3.2 Baseline Public Awareness Program:** Refers to general program recommendations, set forth in Recommended Practice 1162, The baseline recommendations do not take into consideration the unique attributes and characteristics of individual pipeline operators’ pipeline and facilities. Supplemental or enhanced program components are described in the RP to provide guidelines to the operator for enhancing its Public Awareness Programs. This is described more fully in Sections 2 and 6.

**1.3.3 CFR:** *Code of Federal Regulations*

**1.3.4 Dig Safely:** Dig Safely is the nationally recognized campaign to enhance safety, environmental protection, and service reliability by reducing underground facility damage. This damage prevention education and awareness program is used by pipeline companies, One-Call Centers, and others throughout the country. Dig Safely was developed through the joint efforts of the Office of Pipeline Safety and various damage prevention stakeholder organizations. Dig Safely is now within the purview of the Common Ground Alliance (CGA). For more information see [www.commongroundalliance.com](http://www.commongroundalliance.com).

**1.3.5 Enhanced Public Awareness Program:** The concept developed in RP 1162 for assessing particular situations in which it is appropriate to enhance or supplement the Baseline Public Awareness Program. This is described more fully in Section 6.