

Pipelines and Informed Planning Alliance Recommended Practices Protect Communities

Become Risk-Informed

On December 16, 2010, the U. S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) released the Pipelines and Informed Planning Alliance (PIPA) Report, "[Partnering to Further Enhance Pipeline Safety In Communities Through Risk-Informed Land Use Planning](#)".

The PIPA goal is to reduce risks and improve the safety of affected communities and transmission pipelines by improving the way communities plan land use and new development near transmission pipelines. To achieve this goal, PHMSA and PIPA encourage the adoption and implementation of PIPA-developed recommended practices related to risk-informed land use planning near transmission pipelines.

"Development of residences, businesses and green space has increased all over the country, and these areas frequently contain transmission pipelines," said U. S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood.

"Safety for our communities is our number-one priority, and having these new [PIPA] guidelines in place will help communities and pipelines safely coexist."

Local governments, property developers/owners, transmission pipeline operators, and state real estate commissions are identified as the key stakeholders. These stakeholders have relevant roles to enhance pipeline safety and ensure the protection of people, the environment and the pipeline infrastructure. They are encouraged to become aware of, adopt, and implement the PIPA recommended practices.

Adopt Pipeline Safety Consultation Zones

Of particular interest to local county and municipal governments are the PIPA recommendations for developing, adopting, and implementing "consultation zones". An affected local government should define a consultation zone as a mechanism to promote communication between property developers/owners and operators of existing nearby transmission pipelines when new land uses and property developments are being planned. Establishing good communications between pipeline operators and developers is much more effective than, for example, establishing fixed-distance setbacks from transmission pipeline rights-of-way.

It is strongly encouraged that affected local governments adopt **by ordinance** pipeline safety consultation zones. Ordinances should require property developers/owners to review their proposed projects with affected transmission pipeline operators before any application for a land use or development permit within a consultation zone is approved. This should apply for developments in either urban or rural areas. The PIPA Communication Team has undertaken an implementation plan to

engage and support local governments to facilitate their successful adoption and implementation pipeline safety consultation zone ordinances.

Pipeline risks can most often be addressed with proper risk-informed planning and design. Involving the pipeline operator early in the planning process should ensure adequate time to incorporate the operator's safety concerns into project design. The operator can determine if there are any pipelines in the planning area and where they are. Once affected pipelines are identified, the developer or planner can communicate with the pipeline operator to help make risk-informed decisions about what impact a planned project may have on affected pipelines.

Property developers/owners are not transmission pipeline experts. Cynthia Quarterman, PHMSA Administrator, noted that the PIPA recommended practices are fantastic tools for property developers/owners and community planners who know nothing about pipelines. Developers and planners should consult with the pipeline operator to determine whether a proposed land use or development will impact the integrity of a nearby transmission pipeline or the future safety of the public.

About PIPA

The PIPA Report and recommended practices were developed by a structured group of representatives from local governments, public stakeholders, transmission pipeline operators, and pipeline safety regulators. It is the first set of national safety recommendations for developing areas near existing pipelines.

The participating PIPA stakeholders include: the Pipeline Safety Trust, Common Ground Alliance, National Association of Home Builders, National League of Cities (NLC), National Association of Counties, National Association of County Planners, American Land Title Association, National Association of Realtors, American Public Works Association, and others. They join longtime pipeline safety organizations: PHMSA, National Association of State Fire Marshals, National Association of Pipeline Safety Representatives, National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Also central to the PIPA initiative are pipeline operators, represented by: American Gas Association, Interstate Natural Gas Association of America, Association of Oil Pipelines, American Petroleum Institute, American Public Gas Association, and Gas Producers Association.

Mayor Lee Leffingwell (Austin, TX), who served as NLC's representative to the PIPA steering group, said the PIPA recommended practices will "greatly contribute to the safety of residential areas as they develop around existing pipelines." Chuck Lesniak, Environmental Policy Program Manager with the Austin Watershed Protection Department, said, "The PIPA recommended practices will provide valuable tools and guidance for local officials as they try to balance economic development, public safety and protection of important energy infrastructure."

Many of the PIPA recommended practices may appear to be upon review just "common sense," but in practice they and the concept of "risk-informed" planning have generally not been considered and will likely prove enlightening to local governments

For more information, to see all of the PIPA Recommended Practices, and to see and download the entire PIPA Report, go to www.PIPA-Info.com .

