



GAS PIPELINE SAFETY PROGRAM _____ (JANUARY 2024)

The Rhode Island State Pipeline Safety Program is a federal initiative under the direct responsibility of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT). The Pipeline Safety Act (the Act) assigns jurisdiction over all gas pipeline safety in the U.S. to the Secretary of Transportation (Secretary). However, the Act also provides that any state with a law comparable to the Act – in both scope and intent – could enter into an agreement (Certification) with the Secretary to carry out safety enforcement in that state. The Rhode Island legislature, through passage of R.I.G.L. §39-3-40 in 1992, gave the Division of Public Utilities & Carriers (Division) jurisdiction over all intrastate gas pipeline safety in Rhode Island.

Since 1970, when limited funding was first obtained by the State of Rhode Island, the state has become very active in pipeline safety. The funds supplied under the Act are distributed to the state by The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) under the USDOT umbrella. PHMSA monitors the work performance of each state by performing yearly evaluations of applicable programs and reduces grant funding to underperforming programs. The Division's administration has placed considerable emphasis on its gas safety program in recent years, which has expanded to such an extent that it now rivals the robust programs in bigger New England states.

Division staff knowledge in pipeline safety is developed through enrollment in required and elective classes at PHMSA's training facility in Oklahoma City. Staff also attend many regional and national seminars and is active in theoretical and practical training. The Division's Pipeline Safety Program Manager coordinates the agency's safety initiatives. The Program Manager participates fully as a member of the New England Pipeline Safety Representatives (NEPSR), which meets annually and conducts quarterly (at a minimum) Eastern Region conference calls. The Program Manager and staff also enroll in continuing education classes and seminars to conform to the requirements of PHMSA's Transportation & Qualification learning structure.

The Division's Gas Pipeline Safety Program also undertakes the following measures to ensure that the residents of Rhode Island enjoy a safe and reliable gas distribution system:

- Perform periodic inspections of the maintenance and operation records of jurisdictional intrastate operators.
- Perform yearly inspections of the two intrastate LNG facilities, in Exeter and Cumberland. A third LNG facility located in Providence is under Federal jurisdiction.
- Perform unannounced compliance inspections of construction projects that have gas infrastructure to minimize the possibility of future gas-related incidents/accidents.
- Establish and evaluate gas pipeline safety procedures of natural gas master-meter operators¹ and jurisdictional propane systems.

¹ A Master Meter System is defined as a pipeline system for distributing gas within, but not limited to, a definable area, such as a mobile home park, housing project, or apartment complex, where the operator purchases metered gas from an outside source for resale through a gas distribution pipeline system. The gas distribution pipeline system supplies the ultimate consumer who either purchases the gas directly through the meter or by other means, such as by rents. See 815-RICR-20-00-1.3 (19).

- Participate in an emergency notification system with the operator whereby the Division is immediately notified of any incident/accident involving the gas supply and the Pipeline Safety staff then determines the appropriate level of response.
- Attempt to get appropriate legislation introduced whenever it is necessary to protect the public or to codify amended Federal Code.