

Natural Gas Pipelines in Oregon



The Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC) Safety staff inspects new construction, reviews operations/ maintenance plans and procedures for effectiveness and consistent application, as well as reviewing emergency plans for all of Oregon's natural gas system operators.

The PUC has jurisdiction over all operators of intrastate natural gas pipeline systems within the state of Oregon. Three major operators of distribution and transmission pipeline systems are NW Natural Gas, Avista Utilities, and Cascade Natural Gas.

They have 755 miles of high-pressure natural gas transmission lines that begin and end within the boundaries of the state. This mileage of pipelines does not include the smaller distribution pipelines they operate within the state. Including the smaller distribution lines the total is approximately 18,000 miles.

The PUC as part of its standard inspection process plan reviews the operations and maintenance of all existing transmission pipelines under its jurisdiction a minimum of at least once every **three** years.

Oregon also has two operators of interstate natural gas transmission pipelines that cross or enter Oregon from other states. Those operators are Williams NW Pipelines and GTN TransCanada. Interstate pipelines are under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA).

The PUC Staff is periodically requested to assist PHMSA with work on specific inspections and investigations for these major transmission lines.



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The age of the piping is not the only measure used to determine pipeline integrity or risk to the public.

Some common causes of damage or threats to pipeline integrity are:

- By far the most common/ 90% plus of all incidents involving death or injury are caused by third party damage
- Corrosion/ lack of cathodic protection, poor or damaged coating,
- Pipeline defects/ manufacturing defects, transportation issues, construction issues.

The Commission issues approximately 20 to 40 corrective action orders identifying probable violations of the pipeline safety code to operators each year. The companies have promptly address these issues within the 60– 90 day response window they are given and the Commission has not had to resort to fines.

The chief, pipeline safety says to his knowledge there has never been a reportable natural gas transmission pipeline incident with a loss of life within the state of Oregon.

As a matter policy, the Commission does not retain maps of transmission lines or gas systems.

