Response summary for emergency agencies

1. Approach the emergency site from the upwind direction, and park the emergency vehicle(s) at a safe distance from the emergency site.
2. Assess the situation, secure the scene and identify any hazards.
3. Call the pipeline operator, providing the exact location of the pipeline release.
4. Evacuate people from the Hot Zone area to an upwind location.
5. Obtain medical help if necessary.
6. Keep the Hot Zone area secure. Block off roads, railroads and other routes around the site.
7. Eliminate ignition sources such as car engines, pilot lights, smoking materials and electronic devices.
8. Do not attempt to close any valves without direction from pipeline company personnel.
9. Do not attempt to extinguish a fire on the pipeline unless instructed by pipeline company representatives or qualified personnel.
10. Perimeter fires can be extinguished. Be careful when containing liquid spills. Build an earthen dam to prevent oil from flowing further, or set up a boom or flume on waterways.

Be prepared – FREE online training
The National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM) “Pipeline Emergencies” program is a best-in-class online training provided free of charge to all first responders. Supported by the American Petroleum Institute (API) and the Association of Oil Pipe Lines (AOPL), it was created to help first responders learn the techniques and skills to address a hazardous liquid or natural gas pipeline incident. Access the training portal here: https://nasfm-training.org/pipeline/
Know the signs of a pipeline leak

Look for leaks: Accidents can happen on the ground, in buildings, or underground in a wide variety of locations, such as:

Trees, shrubs, and other green, leafy vegetation that would otherwise be there

Any new, unusual or unexplained pooling of liquid or gas

Vapors, which may cause dizziness or suffocation

Explosions, fires, and flames

Smoke or gas spreading downwind

Fire associated with a pipeline event

Clouds of a lower commodity

If you observe any of the pipeline leak signs:

Do not investigate further. Leave the area immediately.

Do not call anyone in the area.

Do not enter the area.

Do not enter any buildings.

Listen for hearing, rumbling or roaring sounds that indicate the escape of pressurized liquids or gases.

Once you are in a safe area, call 911.

Know the location of pipeline rights-of-way in your community

Knowing the location of pipeline rights-of-way in your community can help you respond more quickly. The National Pipeline Mapping System (NPMS) displays maps of hazardous liquid and gas transmission pipelines, liquefied natural gas plants, and other facilities. While the NPMS is available for public view, emergency responders can access a more detailed version available only to government officials. You can access the NPMS at www.npsms.dot.gov.

Know your community

It is important to map and record all pipeline rights-of-way in relation to communities or places of congregation, which include:

• Schools
• Churches
• Hospitals
• Highways
• Sports facilities or parks

Know the location of these facilities in relation to the pipeline rights-of-way and knowing all traffic patterns for safe evacuation from these locations are recommended practices for all first-responder agencies.

Recognize the aboveground pipeline markers

Pipeline markers indicate the presence of underground pipelines. Please ensure your staff is aware of each marker’s significance and their locations. Every marker includes information about:

• The type of product being transported in the pipeline.
• The company operating the pipeline.
• A toll-free telephone number for call before you dig assistance or questions about the pipeline.

Caution

Pipeline markers will not indicate the depth of the pipeline buried below or the exact size of the markers. The markings are intended to identify to the general public the location of the pipeline. They are not intended to be used by individuals to provide the location of underground pipelines for purposes other than call before you dig. If you must dig near a pipeline, call before you dig. Call 811 before you dig.

Know your products

Knowing how to respond to hazardous materials in the first 30 minutes of an accident is critical. The 2016 Emergency Response Guidebook from the U.S. Department of Transportation Publication and Hazardsous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) has partnered with the National Library of Medicine to provide a free smartphone version of the 2016 Emergency Response Guidebook (ERG). Search for ERG 2016 in the app store.

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why pipelines matter

The nation’s pipelines are the arteries of our national energy supply. Pipelines are essential to our transportation system and way of life.

• Nationally, there are 2.5 million miles of underground systems transporting petroleum products safely and economically.
• Pipelines transport by far the largest quantity of natural gas products and are an integral part of the infrastructure of all communities.
• Truck and rail transportation cannot equal the safety record or efficiency of pipelines transport.