

INGAA Members' Pipeline Safety Program: Accomplishments, Plans and Commitments



Interstate Natural Gas Association of America (INGAA) in early 2011 began a comprehensive assessment of the pipeline safety performance and practices of transmission pipelines. The analysis resulted in the creation of a data-results-based action plan to continuously improve pipeline safety, protect the people who live and work near pipelines, and ensure the reliability of natural gas supplies.

Pre-Regulation Pipeline Risk and Integrity Assessment

INGAA members agree that pre-regulation pipelines need to be analyzed to ensure that they are fit for service. INGAA members have worked collaboratively to analyze pipeline data, and have sought to make this data transparent and easily accessible. In accordance with 2011 Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) safety bulletin, members closely analyzed pre-regulation pipeline assets records. Their findings generally confirmed the existence of accurate records and adherence with Maximum Allowable Operating Pressures. These efforts have led to streamlined record-keeping. They also have contributed to formulation of procedures to ensure that pipelines – regardless of age – are fit for service, and that records exist to give regulators and the public confidence in these pipelines.

Engaging Our Stakeholders

INGAA and its members are committed to being thought leaders in natural gas pipeline safety. That role demands being transparent in our efforts and soliciting feedback and information from other members of the pipeline safety community. Over the past year, INGAA has met with stakeholders, including federal and state pipeline officials and pipeline safety advocates, to discuss its pipeline safety proposals, exchange information and views and enhance the process to implement its safety plans. INGAA also has engaged first responders, including fire chiefs and firefighters, to find new and better ways to communicate and share safety information. INGAA is actively promoting the Pipelines and Informed Planning Alliance to help communities make risk-informed decisions for land-use planning and development adjacent to pipelines.

Managing Incident Responses

While INGAA's pipeline safety program looks primarily at preventing accidents, it also believes it is important to plan to respond to any emergencies. As part of this effort, INGAA members studied and created an Incident Mitigation Management System. Key elements include enhanced public awareness; providing information to emergency responders regarding pipeline locations, pressures, controls and contents; and developing coordinated response plans with emergency responders. For its larger pipelines in populated areas, INGAA is committed to achieving a pipeline isolation response time of one hour in populated areas.

Quality Management Systems & Safety Culture

INGAA members analyzed Quality Management Systems (QMS) and their effectiveness to see if implementing these systems could bolster pipeline safety. After studying a number of other industries, including chemical manufacturing, aviation and healthcare, they found that quality management systems worked best when incorporated into an overall safety culture. As a result, INGAA has embraced a zero incident safety culture and is clarifying the elements of QMS for consistent application by members. INGAA and other North American pipeline groups are conducting a comprehensive study to explore safety models and procedures currently utilized by other industry sectors in an effort to deliver natural gas and pipeline-transported liquids more safely and reliably. The study, to be completed later in 2012, will assist the energy pipeline industry to identify and implement a model that will measurably improve pipeline system safety.

Continuously Improving Pipeline Safety

Pipeline safety is not a one-year effort or a five-year effort. It demands a long-term commitment. INGAA members have made that commitment and have laid out a number of Integrity Management (IM) benchmarks they intend to achieve in coming years:

- INGAA pipelines will complete an initial assessment using IM principles on pipelines that cover 90% of the population living along INGAA members' pipelines by December 31, 2012. It will then consistently and comprehensively apply IM principles to those lines by 2020.
- Apply IM principles to pipelines covering 100% of the population living along INGAA member pipelines by 2030.