

# You should know...



North Dakota Public Service Commission

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North Dakota Public  
Service Commission

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## Gas Pipeline Safety

### WHAT IS GAS PIPELINE SAFETY?

Federal law says that gas pipeline facilities used for the distribution and transmission of gas shall be designed, constructed, and operated to meet the safety standards set forth in the regulations of the United States Department of Transportation. The U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Pipeline Safety, has been given the task by Congressional Act for the enforcement of the minimum gas pipeline safety standards on all gas distribution and transmission facilities within the United States.

The Commission acts as an agent for the federal government in the enforcement of those minimum gas safety standards.

Before we can understand what the gas pipeline safety program is in North Dakota, we must first understand what certain words or phrases mean within the context of that program:

- Gas pipeline safety means an inspection program which promotes enhanced public safety through the enforcement of state and federal standards which assist the gas operators of this state in providing a safe and reliable supply of natural gas or propane (LPG) to the public at a minimum risk.
- Transmission system means a pipeline that supplies gas from a production facility or storage facility to a distribution system.
- Distribution system means a system of pressure regulation stations, gas main lines, and gas service lines for providing gas or LPG to customers.

- Operation and maintenance plans, emergency response plans, and construction plans means procedures written by a gas company in compliance with federal regulations that outline the "who, what, when, where, why, and how" a company will provide a safe and reliable fuel source to its customers.
- Gas safety records means the detailed records a gas company produces to document all of the tasks performed as a result of those "plans" mentioned above.
- Gas safety inspection means the onsite audit of gas safety records and the onsite observance of gas company personnel, conducted on a periodic basis, to help ensure that a gas company is following its company plans.
- Jurisdictional, specifically in North Dakota, means all gas or LPG distribution systems (an LPG tank serving one customer is not a distribution system) such as MDU Bismarck, Dickinson, Minot, Jamestown or Williston or Xcel Energy Fargo and Grand Forks, or an LPG distribution system like the City of Granville or MDU Hettinger; and, "intrastate" gas transmission lines like the one that serves north and south Bismarck (intrastate means within the state).
- Non-jurisdictional, specifically in North Dakota, means pipeline facilities in which the federal government remains the chief enforcement entity, such as "interstate" pipelines (pipelines which leave or cross the state), liquid pipelines such as LPG lines, refined fuel lines, crude oil lines, or gas systems not covered under federal or state gas safety regulations (such as LPG tanks serving one customer as seen in most small towns and farms throughout

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## (cont.)

this state). It should be noted here that LPG systems not covered under OPS/PSC jurisdiction may be covered under the jurisdiction of the ND State Fire Marshall's Office.

North Dakota's gas safety inspectors visit each operator at different times during the year to conduct record audits and various types of onsite field inspections of gas company personnel, including new construction, corrosion, pressure regulation and overpressure protection, etc. These inspections help ensure compliance with federal minimum standards.

### WHAT IS A GAS SAFETY INCIDENT?

An incident means any event that involves the release of gas from a pipeline or pipeline facility AND: a death, or personal injury resulting in hospitalization; or estimated property damage (which includes the cost of gas lost to the operator and customer), totaling \$50,000 or more; OR, any event that is significant, in the judgment of the operator, even though it did not meet the criteria listed above.

If you witness a release of natural gas from a pipeline, or an explosion or fire resulting from a natural gas release, move away from the area and call 911 immediately.