

Working with Third Parties

Working Together, Pipelines and Third Parties Can Help Enhance Pipeline Safety

Damage caused by third parties is a significant cause of pipeline incidents across the United States. Third parties can be contractors, developers, farmers, or even local residents who inadvertently cause damage to pipelines by digging or conducting other construction activities on rights of way. Federal and state agencies and pipeline companies communicate with third parties so that they may avoid causing damage.

Where are pipelines located?

There are more than two million miles of transmission pipelines transporting natural gas across the United States. Of these, 300,000 miles are used for interstate transmission. The El Paso Pipeline Group's pipelines are identified clearly with pipeline identification markers and signs, and flags are used as additional markers when a third party calls before digging. It is important that you not assume that the pipeline is located in a straight line between pipeline right of way markers. Pipeline routes generally follow the natural contour of the land. Therefore, they may curve to avoid natural barriers. If you have any questions about the location of an El Paso Pipeline Group pipeline, call us and we will send a representative to the site to pinpoint and mark the pipeline's exact location and depth.

What do pipeline companies do to prevent third-party damage?

Natural gas pipeline companies spend more than \$560 million a year on research, facility inspection and testing, maintenance, emergency planning, and public awareness. The pipeline industry has extensive experience using multiple and mutually reinforcing safety systems, monitoring and inspection techniques, and maintenance programs to keep the pipelines operating properly. Pipeline operators coordinate their procedures with local authorities in case of emergencies, and pipeline companies also engage in community awareness programs to educate residents about safety. The focus of pipeline safety education is to prevent construction and excavation damage, which is a leading cause of pipeline accidents. To respond to potential damage to their facilities, pipeline companies have supported the development of *One Call* programs that encourage consumers and excavators to call before they excavate. The national *One Call* number is **1-888-258-0808**. Each state has its own *One Call* center that can be contacted when excavation is planned. The *One Call* center will notify utilities of the excavation, and the utilities will mark any facilities that may be affected by the proposed work.

With hundreds of thousands of miles of pipeline already in the ground, it is inevitable that development of homes, businesses, schools, and recreation areas will take place near existing pipeline sites. If an area is developed after a pipeline is built, the pipeline company may be required by law to upgrade its facilities to provide a higher margin of safety.

Is it safe to cross a pipeline right of way?

Yes. The pipeline typically is buried underground and is safe to cross on foot or in a light vehicle. However, excessive use of vehicles on a right of way can cause erosion. Also, heavy equipment such as backhoes, tractors, and front-end loaders can damage a buried pipeline. For this reason, we ask that you contact the El Paso Pipeline Group before driving or transporting heavy equipment over our pipeline right of way.