

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Log P-227

ISSUED: June 13, 1983

Forwarded to:

Mr. Stanley R. Brown
President
Land Improvement Contractors
of America
10051 Leopard
Corpus Christi, Texas 78410

Mr. Robert D. Bugher
Executive Director
American Public Works Association
1313 East 60th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60637

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

P-83-15

About 2:15 p.m., c.s.t., on November 4, 1982, a tile plow installing field drainage tile on a farm located 4 miles west of Hudson, Iowa, struck and punctured a well marked, 20-inch-diameter natural gas transmission pipeline. Natural gas escaping at about 820 psig ignited immediately, and the ensuing fire killed five persons, destroyed five pieces of excavation machinery and two pickup trucks, and burned several acres of soybean stubble. 1/

Excavation damage to pipelines is the largest single cause of all reported pipeline accidents. Since 1969, the Safety Board has issued 58 major reports of pipeline accident of which 21, or 36 percent, were directly caused by excavation equipment or excavation processes. Because of its concern for the increasing number of excavation accidents, the Safety Board conducted a symposium in Washington, D.C., on April 18, 1972, on Prevention of Damage to Pipelines. The symposium discussed excavation caused damage to pipelines and reviewed some damage prevention programs and regulatory action taken by the Federal, State, and local governments. From material developed in part from the symposium, the Safety Board issued a special study on the prevention of damage to pipelines. The study discussed the damage prevention responsibilities of excavators, contractors, and pipeline operators and concluded that:

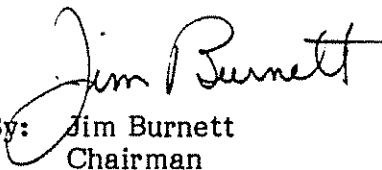
1/ For more detailed information, read Pipeline Accident Report—"Northern Natural Gas Company Pipeline Puncture, Explosion and Fire, Hudson, Iowa, November 4, 1982" (NTSB-PAR-83-2).

As a result of its investigation, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Land Improvement Contractors of America and the American Public Works Association:

Notify its members of the circumstances of the accident in Hudson, Iowa, on November 4, 1982, and urge them to cooperate and communicate with pipeline operators before beginning excavation work and to explain fully their excavation plans and any changes in plans.
(Class II, Priority Action) (P-83-15)

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency with the statutory responsibility ". . . to promote transportation safety by conducting independent accident investigations and by formulating safety improvement recommendations." (P.L. 93-633). The Safety Board is vitally interested in any actions taken as a result of its safety recommendations, and would appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendations in this letter.

BURNETT, Chairman, GOLDMAN, Vice Chairman, and McADAMS, BURSLEY, and ENGEN, Members, concurred in these recommendations.


By: Jim Burnett
Chairman