

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

FOR RELEASE: 6:30 A.M., E.D.T., OCTOBER 27, 1976

(202) 426-8787

ISSUED: October 27, 1976

-----  
Forwarded to:  
Mr. J. Hugh Roff, Jr.  
President  
United Gas Pipe Line Company  
P. O. Box 1478  
Houston, Texas 77001  
-----

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)  
P-76-78 through P-76-80

At 1:05 p.m., on August 9, 1976, a road grader ruptured a looped, 20-inch, natural gas transmission line in Cartwright, Louisiana. Gas at 770 psig escaped in several directions from the line's two streams and ignited within seconds. The resulting flame engulfed the area, killed six residents, injured one person, and incinerated two houses, a house trailer, and several acres of land.

The Jackson Parish Police Jury (Jury) road grader was cleaning road drainage ditches on schoolbus routes before the opening of Parish schools when it struck the line crossing under Griffin Road. United Gas Pipe Line Company (United), operator of the line, had not been notified that the ditches would be cleaned.

The National Transportation Safety Board's preliminary investigation of this accident disclosed that the pipeline was constructed in 1949, before Federal regulation of natural gas transportation and before construction of Griffin Road. The pipeline was originally buried 36 inches below the surface; but during construction of the road in 1972, the pipe cover at the east drainage ditch was reduced by about 2 feet. United's aerial patrol observed this construction and United dispatched personnel to the site to assure protection of the pipe. Eight pipeline markers were installed over the 20-inch and 24-inch pipelines. Federal standards for newly constructed pipelines would require 36 inches of cover at the drainage ditch.

P-76-78 through P-76-80

Currently, United communicates with excavators only after a company patrol discovers activity near its pipelines.

After the accident, United rerouted the road around the accident site, replaced the damaged pipe and covered it with dirt. United did not determine immediately a way of protecting the pipe in the future.

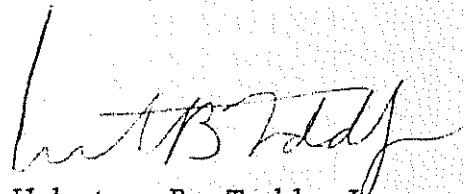
Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that United Gas Pipe Line Company:

Protect the 20-inch and 24-inch pipelines from future excavation damage before reopening Griffin Road. (Class I, Urgent Followup) (P-76-78)

Determine the depth of pipelines at all other road crossings where the cover over the pipeline may have been reduced by later road construction and take necessary action to prevent damage by ditch-cleaning or road-grading activities. (Class I, Urgent Followup) (P-76-79)

Complete promptly development of an educational program for excavators and institute a program to advise excavators how to recognize pipeline rights-of-way, provide general information about precautions when excavating near pipelines, and encourage notification before excavating. (Class I, Urgent Followup) (P-76-80)

TODD, Chairman, McADAMS, HOGUE and HALEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendations. BAILEY, Vice Chairman, did not participate.



By: Webster B. Todd, Jr.  
Chairman

THIS RECOMMENDATION WILL BE RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC ON THE ISSUE DATE SHOWN ABOVE. NO PUBLIC DISSEMINATION OF THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE MADE PRIOR TO THAT DATE.