

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:  
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SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

P-76-74 and P-76-75

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.

P-76-74 and P-76-75

The National Transportation Safety Board's preliminary investigation of this accident disclosed that the pipeline was constructed in 1949, before Federal regulation of the transportation of natural gas 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.

Since the construction of Griffin Road, the Jury stated that it had not been contacted by, or received any information from, United concerning excavating near pipelines. Further, all safety precautions and education of Jury personnel who operate excavation equipment are the responsibilities of the operator's foreman; safety meetings are conducted at irregular times with subject matter chosen by the foreman.

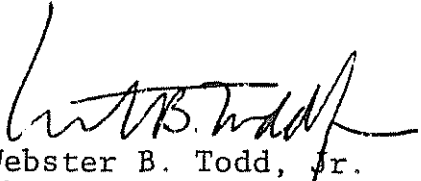
Currently, United communicates with excavators only after a company patrol discovers activity near its pipelines.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Interstate Natural Gas Association of America, the American Petroleum Institute, and the American Gas Association:

Advise their member companies of the circumstances of this accident and urge them to determine if the original cover depths of their pipelines have been significantly reduced, and to take action to correct deficient areas. (Class I, Urgent Followup) (P-76-74)

Urge their member companies to participate in or establish damage prevention programs, including the "one-call" notification system. (Class I, Urgent Followup) (P-76-75)

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.