

Pipelines and Informed Planning Alliance (PIPA) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

3/14/2012

Q.1 What type of mitigative actions does PIPA recommend for local governments?

A. Local government actions, which may be adopted by ordinance, may include:

- Development and implementation of “consultation zones” and “planning areas” to promote communication with pipeline operators when land use and development is planned in proximity to pipeline rights-of-way. Some local governments have created a transmission pipeline risk-reduction overlay district in their mapping system to support identification of new or changed land use and development near transmission pipelines;
- Constraints on the types of activities that may be conducted on or near transmission pipeline rights-of-way;
- Restrictions on the types of land use and development that is allowed along transmission pipeline rights-of-way;
- Requirements for specific design or construction considerations for development in proximity to a pipeline ROW to:
 1. Reduce pipeline risk
 2. Prevent interference with pipeline O&M
 3. Prevent environmental contamination & excavation damage
 4. Consider pipeline noise and odor
 5. Consider ability to evacuate & site emergency response planning
- Implementation of other PIPA recommended practices that address mapping, land records management, and communications.

Q.2 Are PIPA recommended practices required by the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA)?

A. No. The PIPA recommended practices are not mandated by any public or private entity. However, they were developed by task teams of representative stakeholders who agreed on the practices, using a process similar to that used during the [Common Ground Study](#) in which consensus agreement was needed by all team participants for each recommended practice.

Consensus was defined as requiring that each participant must be able to “live with” the team recommendations and decisions, even if not ideal. The process of developing consensus is considered to have increased each participant’s appreciation for the legitimate needs and concerns of the other stakeholders.

All stakeholders are encouraged to become aware of and implement the PIPA recommended practices where appropriate.

Q.3 Are all PIPA recommended practices appropriate for everyone?

A. No. In some cases implementation of the PIPA recommended practices may not be feasible or cost effective. They are intended to provide guidance to pipeline operators, local government officials, property owners and developers for the safe use and development of land near transmission pipelines.

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Some local governments may want to adopt certain of the PIPA recommended practices within their land development regulations; others may simply encourage voluntary adoption by their local development community. Both approaches have been used by communities around the country.

During the development of the PIPA recommended practices, it was recognized that a wide variety of technology is used by local governments both for mapping and for processing of land development proposals. Local governments with limited technology capabilities and funding may not be able to fully implement some of the recommended practices.

Also, consider a property developer/owner with a small parcel of land with a significant portion of the property contiguous to a transmission pipeline right-of-way. The size and shape of the parcel might limit the ability of the property developer/owner to implement the recommended practices pertaining to land use and development included in the PIPA Report.

Q.4 What pipelines are included in the scope of the PIPA report?

A. The PIPA recommended practices apply to land use planning and development in proximity to hazardous liquid or gas transmission pipelines. Our energy pipeline transportation system also includes networks of production, gathering, and distribution pipelines. However, the PIPA initiative focuses exclusively on transmission pipelines; the PIPA recommended practices are not intended to apply to those production, gathering, and distribution pipeline systems.

The PIPA recommended practices were not intended for consideration in the siting of new pipelines. There is an extensive network of federal and state regulatory and judicial processes involved with the evaluation and approval of new transmission pipeline siting and construction. These are beyond the scope of the PIPA recommended practices.

The PIPA recommended practices associated with reducing the risks of excavation damage may be applicable to all underground facilities. However, the PIPA recommended practices are considered to complement the damage prevention best practices developed, maintained and promoted by the [Common Ground Alliance \(CGA\)](#) and are not intended to replace or conflict with any of the CGA best practices.

Q.5 Who “owns” PIPA?

A. PHMSA is currently the steward of PIPA. Representatives from all stakeholder groups continue to actively participate in raising awareness and encouraging implementation of the PIPA recommended practices.

Q.6 What is PIPA’s position on set-backs?

A. Transmission pipeline failures present risks that may impact people and property beyond the edge of pipeline rights-of-way (ROW). To address these risks, some communities have imposed zoning restrictions, including fixed-distance building setbacks for development along transmission pipeline ROW. Building setbacks are typically used by local governments to provide separation between the community and potential risks, in this case pipelines. However, fixed-distance setbacks commonly don’t consider the risks involved with a specific pipeline and the physical environment in which the pipeline operates.

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Individual transmission pipelines differ in character – some are large-diameter, high-pressure, cross-country pipelines traversing mostly rural areas, while others are located in urban areas and densely-populated urban centers. Transmission pipelines operated within urban areas may be located underneath public streets and roadways in areas that are already well-developed. Federal regulations attempt to mitigate the risk of transmission pipelines located in more densely-populated areas by imposing more stringent requirements. For example, gas transmission pipelines located in heavily populated urban areas are generally required to adhere to additional design, operation, and maintenance requirements.

Each situation is unique relative to the pipeline characteristics and the areas surrounding the pipeline ROW. Thus, the Pipelines and Informed Planning Alliance (PIPA) recommends that implementing a risk-informed approach to land use planning and development and establishing good communication with the transmission pipeline operator is more appropriate than establishing a fixed-distance setback to be applied in all situations.

The PIPA recommended practices are intended to enhance safety by guiding stakeholder communications and actions early in the planning stages.