

Meeting Summary – Pipeline Communications exploratory session, API, 2/28/00

Attending:

Mary Jo Cooney, OPS
Christina Sames, OPS
Michele Joy, AOPL
Jim Pates, City of Fredericksburg, VA
Mary Woodell, Cycla Corp.
Jeff Wiese, OPS
Susan Castiglione, Colonial Pipeline
Terry Boss, INGAA
Denise Garcia, National League of Cities
Bill Hickman, API
Denise Hamsher, Lakehead and Enbridge Pipelines
Stacey Gerard, OPS
Ben Cooper, AOPL
Jerry Bowman, Chevron/AOPL
Gweneyette Broussard, Equilon Pipeline
Marty Matheson, API

This meeting was held to explore the subject of pipeline communications and to identify possible opportunities for improvement. Its purpose was to gather information and ideas, with the goal of developing preliminary concepts and establishing a starting point for further discussion among industry, government, and public interest stakeholders.

The meeting opened with a discussion of participants' expectations, starting with S. Gerard, who provided the OPS perspective. Gerard focused on the HCA rulemaking and Integrity Management, whose goals include more pipeline testing, enhanced operator information, a stronger government role, and improved communications. In the HCA context, the target for pipeline communications is community-based public officials representing organizations responsible for some aspect of community welfare, including e.g., public health and safety, planning and zoning, environmental protection, etc.

Gerard said that information provided should enable these public officials to a) understand pipeline risks and their consequences; b) assess operator efforts to manage those risks; and c) provide feedback to the operator and the regulator. From OPS' perspective, the task is to identify what kinds of information are needed to do this, and what are the best ways to convey it.

Other OPS participants' goals/expectations included:

- < to determine how best to organize information for optimal public education
- < to improve interactions among companies, organizations, and communities
- < to leverage the National Pipeline Mapping System as a communications tool

Industry participants' goals/expectations included:

- < to get a sense of the extent of public interest and involvement
- < to clarify how to communicate fairly without setting up unrealistic expectations
- < to exchange experience and insight
- < to address multiple constituencies, help communities, and listen to public concerns
- < to define who needs what information, and to provide it effectively
- < to assess the efficacy of communications, not just their vehicles
- < to find ways of using current level of attention to pipeline issues productively

J. Pates of Fredericksburg urged that the meeting be used to explore ways to establish dialogue with local governments, and to encourage productive interactions among operators, local public officials, and OPS.

D. Garcia of the National League of Cities told the group that the NLC is evaluating pipeline issues as a policy priority, and that her role in attending was to learn more about these issues and gather information for the NLC policy group's consideration.

S. Gerard provided an update on the HCA rulemaking, which is expected to be delivered by March 30. She said that the question of pipeline communications would be the subject of a follow-up proposal rather than embedded in the HCA rule itself, to allow OPS to consider the topic in depth. Such a proposal would likely include ways to communicate information about pipeline risks and their mitigation, and in some manner enable performance comparisons.

The group then discussed what types of information and dissemination would meet these expectations. Participants reviewed information requirements under current regulations, including public education requirements, damage prevention outreach, OPA reporting, and requirements for liaison with public officials.

The group agreed that organizing and fielding a pilot communications program would enable OPS, industry, and public officials to assess efficacy and make necessary refinements, prior to enactment of communications requirements in connection with the HCA rulemaking.

Participants expressed concern that the general level of knowledge/awareness of pipeline operations and infrastructure is extremely low, and endorsed the idea of raising this level as part of any pipeline communications initiative. The group agreed that preparing and delivering general information – "Pipeline 101" – should be the backdrop for company-specific information, to help educate public officials and enable them to better understand this information in context.

Participants agreed that they needed a better understanding of communities' information needs, particularly as they relate to usage outside the emergency response community, e.g., for planning and zoning purposes, or in the context of pipeline siting. The group recognized that different people have different information needs, depending on their respective roles with regard to

pipeline integrity, and that information should be as relevant and responsive as possible.

Types of information-gathering discussed included “Lessons Learned” reports from communities affected by a pipeline incident and from other industries such as chemical manufacturing and nuclear power, and survey research to establish an understanding of the level of knowledge/awareness among public officials. Efforts such as these were also recognized as creating a potential opportunity for opening a dialogue with community-based officials, and for listening to their concerns.

The group also agreed that a number of credible third-party organizations should be enlisted in the education effort, to provide input and guidance, to lend credibility and authority to the effort, and to assist in disseminating information via their memberships. Groups such as the American Planning Association, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the National Association of County Officials), as well as NAPSR and NARUC were identified as potential third-party partners. Engaging the Common Ground/Path Forward foundation as an expert body was also proposed, recognizing its role in defining and evolving pipeline Best Practices. In addition, the 1989 Transportation Research Board report was cited as an example of credible third-party reporting, and interest was expressed in revisiting and updating this report.

On a preliminary basis, the group defined a pilot communications program with the following components:

- < Expanded liaison between OPS and public officials
- < Operators to provide the following information:
 - < Company-specific preamble describing overall pipeline system
 - < Description of specific HCA sections, including size, volume, characteristics, and regulatory status
 - < Description of risk assessment process
 - < Description of HCAs
 - < Contact information, including operator, OPS, state inspectors

Assumptions for this model include:

- < The focus is on operators’ interaction with local public officials
- < Local public officials’ information needs have been defined
- < The pilot is fielded in diverse communities, including:
 - < a community affected by an incident
 - < a community in which a pipeline is being sited
 - < a community in which there is no activity (business as usual)
 - < a rural community

- < The pilot is fielded by diverse operators, including a small operator
- < "Pipeline 101" information/education program is in place, and provides general information concerning regulatory framework, respective roles and responsibilities of the operator and of federal, state, and local officials, as well as basic information about pipeline operations and the pipeline transportation system.
- < Pre- and post-pilot survey or other research is conducted.

Several industry participants expressed preliminary interest in participating in such a pilot program, and agreed to discuss further with their companies.

M. Matheson agreed to flesh out the pilot program concept for circulation to and comment from OPS, industry, and other stakeholders. The group agreed to engage their respective organizations in furthering discussion of the pilot and other pipeline communications issues.