

Committee on Gas

Workforce Development Best Practices in Pipeline Safety

Monday, February 10, 2020
2:45 – 3:45 pm



PIPELINE SAFETY BEST PRACTICES

Shane Early General Counsel of
the MA Department of Public Utilities

FEBRUARY 10, 2020



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- DPU Initial Response to the September 2018 Merrimack Valley Overpressurization
- Steps DPU has taken to improve pipeline safety since the Merrimack Valley Overpressurization
- Recommendations from Dynamic Risk's Final Report



DPU INITIAL RESPONSE TO MV OVERPRESSURIZATION

- Under Massachusetts G.L. c. 25, § 4B, less than 24 hours after the incident, the DPU Chair ordered another gas distribution company to take over the emergency response efforts for a limited time.
- Later, the DPU Chair named a Chief Recovery Officer to work on the recovery efforts with the original gas distribution company.
- The DPU Chair also ordered all Massachusetts investor-owned gas distribution companies to pay for an independent evaluation of the state's gas distribution as well as the companies' policies and practices.
- After an RFP process, the DPU selected Dynamic Risk to perform the evaluation.



EXAMPLES OF STEPS BY DPU TO IMPROVE PIPELINE SAFETY SINCE MV

- Tripled the size of the Pipeline Safety Division and made organizational changes to the division
- Implemented legislation requiring a professional engineer's stamp on certain gas pipeline work
- New regulations to increase accountability for violators of the Dig Safe program
- Expansion of the state's program to replace leak-prone pipe (eligible pipe and amount of work)



STEPS BY DPU CONTINUED

- New legislation to set interim targets for the replacement of leak-prone pipe and to consider leak rates on the system when selecting replacement work
- Issued regulations on the repair of gas leaks
- Companies voluntarily adopted API 1173
- Conducted 11 emergency response drills with gas distribution companies in 2019
- Coordination across agencies (e.g., emergency response, curtailment, Dig Safe)



DYNAMIC RISK RECOMMENDATIONS

- Two-phase evaluation with final report released 1/31/20 (available on the Pipeline Safety Division's website)
- Over 40 recommendations, including
 - Replacement of low-pressure systems with medium- or high-pressure systems
 - The ratio of company inspectors per jobsite (with 1:1 or 1:2 viewed as a best practice)
 - Requiring contractors to have safety programs that meet or exceed the company's own program



RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED

- Improve records of gas assets through timely electronic updates based on findings in the field
- Treat emergency response as a core competency with increased drilling and common understanding of the incident command system
- Enhance the replacement of leak-prone pipe through a focus on leak rates
- Add focus to the regulator's employee retention
- Use educational as well as punitive responses to address code violations by a company

Committee on Gas

Workforce Development Best Practices in Pipeline Safety

Monday, February 10, 2020