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
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
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)
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)
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
• 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
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