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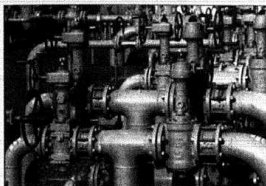
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# The Register-Guard

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**Critics — including regulators — say Oregon should keep better track of the Portland-to-Eugene gasoline pipeline**

## Holding the line



The manifold system that runs the pipeline is manually controlled.

By DIANE DIETZ  
 PHOTOS BY THOMAS BOYD  
*The Register-Guard*

**T**HE EXPLOSIONS DIDN'T COME out of the blue, but out of the ground. A sudden firestorm rose up from a creek bed in an urban park in June and claimed the lives of two boys at play and a young fisherman casting for trout. It was a strange accident, and one that few people could have foreseen.

But the gasoline leak that caused the explosions and fire in Bellingham, Wash., isn't only possible but probable somewhere along the nation's 157,000 miles of buried, high-pressure petroleum pipelines — including the line that runs from Portland to Eugene.

Pipeline operators propel gasoline through the lines at tremendous force, so a leak or rupture can send gasoline shooting into the air. Gasoline is

volatile, a hint of a spark in those conditions will cause an inferno.

Whenever there's a high-pressure gasoline pipeline, there's a potential for disaster. Every Lane Rural Fire/Rescue fire truck is equipped with foam against that potential.

"It's by good fortune, and only good fortune, that we haven't had a major disaster," said Bob Garrison, Oregon's chief deputy fire marshal.

The Kinder Morgan Energy Partners pipeline — which carries gasoline and diesel from Portland to Eugene — has had no major leaks or spills in recent years. State and local officials speak well of the operators.

But unlike Washington and California, the Oregon

Legislature hasn't given the state authority to oversee most of the Oregon pipeline — and that's a mistake, says Department of Environmental Quality Director Langston Marsh.

Without state regulation, the federal Office of Pipeline Safety is the only fail-safe for the rest of Oregon, and congressional representatives — including Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore. — are raising serious questions about that agency's ability or willingness to act in the public interest.

So, Oregon has no regulators double-checking the pipeline as it cruises underneath neighborhoods and crisscrosses rivers and streams. There's no extra

Turn to PIPELINE, Page 7A

## EPA limits pesticides harmful to children

**■ Agriculture:** Officials say fresh produce is safe and that restrictions will add another "measure of protection."

By ELIZABETH SHOEGREN  
 Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — The Environmental Protection Agency on Monday restricted the use of two popular pesticides in an effort to protect children and other consumers from toxic chemicals used on crops.

The agency's action, the first major step in a 10-year review process, banned the use of methyl parathion on all fruits and many vegetables and limited the quantity of azinphos methyl that can be used on foods common in children's diets, such as apples, peaches and pears.

The newly restricted compounds and three dozen other "organophosphates," which account for about half the pesticides used in the United States, kill plant-eating insects by interfering with their nervous systems. In humans, residue from the toxic pesticides has the potential to disrupt brain development in children, studies show.

A key element of the science of assessing the safety of pesticides and other potentially toxic compounds is determining the levels at which they become dangerous.

Monday's action marked the first time the EPA has judged the relative safety of pesticides according to their impact on children.

"By setting standards based on our children, this administration is ensuring a

Turn to PESTICIDES, Page 6A

## Crews search rail wreckage for survivors

By DEXTER FILKINS  
 Los Angeles Times

NEW DELHI, India — Indian rescue workers struggled Monday to free survivors from what was rapidly emerging as one of history's worst train wrecks, with the number killed threatening to exceed 400 and hundreds more injured.

Mangled bodies, flattened cars and a trail of shoes, glass and severed limbs marked the site where two Indian passenger trains packed with 2,500 people smashed into each other about 2 a.m. Monday. The trains collided near the remote eastern town of Gaisal, about 300 miles north of Calcutta.

Initial reports blamed the accident on a switching error that put the two trains on the same track heading straight for each other.

Survivors described a scene of horrific carnage, a collision followed by a firestorm. The wreck took apart 15 train cars. It hurled sleeping passengers around compartments and tossed them out the doors. More than 100 bodies lay side by side under white sheets on the platform at Gaisal station.

Rescue workers struggled to pry open other cars, searching for survivors and

Turn to CRASH, Page 6A



Sid Carr of Kinder Morgan Energy Partners says the pipeline that fills his tanks with gasoline and diesel is the safest way to transport petroleum.

## Gasoline line crisscrosses fields, front yards

**■ Route:** Homeowners along the pipeline's path often lack knowledge about its underground course.

By DIANE DIETZ  
 The Register-Guard

Debbie Tilley knew a pipeline passed through the front yard of her northern Lane County home.

But she didn't know it carried 1.6 million gallons of fuel each day, or that it supplied almost all of the gasoline burned by drivers in Lane County and the rest of Southwest Oregon.

"I thought it was empty," she said. That lack of knowledge — for Tilley or anyone else along the line — could prove costly and dangerous.

Property owners who accidentally strike the pipeline digging a fence-post hole, for instance, or plowing a field could be out big bucks. They're liable for environmental cleanup costs and could face a \$5,000 to \$10,000 fine for violating state digging rules.

Worse, a nick in the high-pressure pipeline could cause a leak, a gush and

an explosion — either at the time of collision or years later. Property owners need to know how to protect themselves in case of a leak, officials say.

"People should really understand what they've got on their property," said Jack Dent, who oversees natural gas pipelines for the Oregon Public Utilities Commission.

"If they know what's there, and they can keep their eye on it, it should give them some peace of mind," he said.

Oregon has one main high-pressure gasoline pipeline. It moves into Lane County north of Coburg, crosses under the Willamette River, skirts River Road and then Prairie Road, and surfaces at a tank farm next to the railroad tracks just north of the Eugene city limits. The line was buried 4 to 4½ feet underground, although



Bill Kabiser, 64, lights a cigarette as he stands on the spot where he thinks an underground gas pipeline is located.

nearly four decades of erosion may have changed the depth in places.

The pipeline passes through dozens of fields where farmers till, disk and plow. It runs right under the front lot at Riverview Grocery where shoppers park.

It goes across Ruby Stone's front yard, passing 50 feet from her front bedrooms — but she didn't fret when crews dug the line years ago. "I had too many other things to worry about," the 64-year-old filbert farmer said.

Neighbor Bill Kabiser has pictures

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# ROUTE

Continued From Page One

from when crews installed the pipe in 1982, but it took him a while to remember exactly where the line goes across his front yard. He looked up and down Prairie Road, put a Bonus Vantage cigarette to his lips and then said, as he lit up, "I'm standing in probably where that pipeline is now."

Federal regulations require pipeline owners to mark the route with warning signs that state in 1-inch high lettering and sharply contrasting background color: "Warning," "Caution" or "Danger," followed by the words "Petroleum Pipeline." Kinder Morgan Energy Partners' signs are yellow and lollipop-shaped, and they stand about waist high.

The rules don't specify how



The line crosses Ruby Stone's yard, passing 50 feet from her house.

close together the signs must be — only that the "location is accurately known."

They aren't frequent enough along Crossroads Lane in northern

Lane County, at least as far as Tilley is concerned. "It's not marked anywhere," she said, surveying the street in front of her house, where there are none.

Chloe Hill found a sign that was supposed to mark where the pipeline passes her property off Hayes Lane, but it was buried in a blackberry bush. She propped the sign against a tree and has waited for the pipeline company to fix it for at least three years, she said.

Sid Carr, who manages the pipeline for Kinder Morgan, said the pipeline is adequately marked. There are dozens of signs that show where the pipeline crosses roads and at irregular intervals where the pipeline parallels roads — although pipeline workers can't say how many they've placed in Lane County.

"You put them often enough that a person in the area would see them and realize there's a pipeline here," said Ron Lou, a lead operator for Kinder Morgan. "Not necessarily every 50 feet or every 50 yards."

People don't notice their

environment, that's the problem, Carr said. "There can't be a sign every 5 feet." He said, "There are sufficient signs."

Homeowners have a chance to learn about any pipeline that crosses their land when they buy the property. The pipeline easement is included in property descriptions, but the descriptions are buried in the thick stack of mortgage papers — and easy to miss, Dent said.

"A lot of people have never looked at their easements," he said. Some of them are unpleasantly surprised when they find out. "Riverbank owners, owner Bill James had noticed the Kinder Morgan sign near his house, but it didn't mean much to him — and certainly not that the region's supply of gasoline was passing in the ground under his doorstep."

"You'd have thought somebody would have mentioned it," he said.

# PIPELINE MARKERS

- Federal rules require pipeline operators to maintain signs marking the pipeline's underground route.
- The regulation: "Markers must be located at each road crossing; at each railroad crossing; and in sufficient number along the remainder of each buried line so that its location is accurately known."
- Find out where: Does a pipeline — or other underground utility — cross your property? You may not certainly want to know before you dig a fence post or any other type of hole. You can telephone the One Call Utility Notification Center, (800) 332-2344.

— U.S. Office of Pipeline Safety

# PIPELINE

Continued From Page One

scrutiny where the pipeline passes upriver from drinking water intakes for Jefferson, Albany — and soon, Willamette.

"Basically nobody is minding the store," said Bob Rock, a former chairman of the National Pipeline Reform Coalition, made up of government and environmental groups.

## 'Live with the devil'

No doubt Lane County and Northwestern Oregon depend on the 8-inch steel pipeline that carries gasoline the length of the Willamette Valley.

Former Kinder Morgan Energy Partners, a Houston-based firm with pipelines in 16 states — pumps 1.6 million gallons of gasoline a day from Portland to its tank farm just west from Eugene city limits. The line supplies just about every car and truck on the road in the region. Kinder Morgan can hold a 14-day supply, but usually keeps only four days' worth at the Prairie Road tank farm.

The gasoline is made from Alaskan oil refined into gasoline in Northwest Washington and shipped through the pipe that blew up in Bellingham in Portland, where it enters the Kinder Morgan pipeline for the trip to Eugene.

The supply was threatened in the second half of the Bellingham explosion until a pipeline technician barging more gas around the break in the line.

"We kept that pretty quiet," said Garry Likens, Eugene fire chief. Carr, who manages Jerry Brown Co., which trucks fuel to 500 Northwestern Oregon stations. "We were headed for trouble. That's something people don't understand. They think it's a big, big pipe."

It would take 166 tanker trucks running the 15 corridor each day to replace the volume of gasoline carried by the Kinder Morgan pipeline. They would make the freeway smellier and more hazardous — but whether they'd spill as much gasoline is a much-debated question among environmentalist and pipeline operators.

"Right now anyone would have a hard time saying this is safer than that," said Mike Zandbergen, who oversees pipelines for the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality.

Moving gasoline by pipeline is as safe as it gets, said Sid Carr, who manages the Oregon pipeline for Kinder Morgan. But the potential for an explosion like Bellingham is always there. "You've got to live with the devil," he said.

## A force, not of nature

Keeping the Oregon pipeline safe is a 24-hour-a-day job for Kinder Morgan operators in Orange County, Calif., who must make snap decisions about pipeline conditions hundreds of miles from where they sit — with the help of extra eyes in Portland and Eugene.

Moving through the pipeline at pressures eight times that of a fire hose, the flow of the gasoline has a will of its own. If a pipeline operator closes a valve and stops the flow too fast, they can cause a line rupturing pressure surge. If the surge gets a leak and they don't slow it down, thousands of gallons of gasoline can pour out.

Consequently, pipeline operators and safety officials prepare for the worst. "It's like volcanoes except it's a man-made product," said Chip Darling, chief at Lane Rural Fire/Rescue.

U.S. hazardous liquid pipelines average 36 leaks a year during the past three decades, according to Office of Pipeline Safety data, as analyzed by Cutter Information Corp., a private research firm.

Oregon had 13 spills averaging 106,154 gallons each during those three decades. Explosions and fires have followed 2.9 percent of the nation's spills, according to the Cutter analysis.

The spills come when old and inadequately maintained pipelines corrode and split or when heavy equipment operators accidentally bump or break the line. A bump

can weaken and eventually undermine the pipe wall, causing a rupture months or years later. Pipeline walls are generally thin — one-fifth or one-quarter inch thick.

The state's closest call was in Salem a decade ago, when a road-building bulldozer took an unauthorized shortcut through the Mill Creek stream bed, where the 37-year-old Portland-to-Eugene pipeline runs.

The pipeline, buried under the stream bed, was crushed. Gasoline shot up between the bulldozer's body and its track and poured into the creek.

Before operators could shut the pipeline down, 30,000 gallons of gasoline flowed through 7 miles of creek. Corrections officials prepared to evacuate the Oregon State Prison. Firefighters closed streets and evacuated a trailer park. "The potential was unthinkable," said Garrison, the county fire marshal.

Fish threw themselves on riverbanks to escape the toxic wash, witnesses said. Hundreds of chinook salmon and rainbow trout died outright. The bulldozer company had to pay the state \$45,000 in compensation for the loss of fish and other wildlife, plus a \$100,000 fine.

The causes of the explosion in Bellingham last month will be a mystery until the National Transportation Safety Board releases its report in six to nine months. Investigators are focusing on several factors. A computer problem may have fooled an operator into pumping fuel in the line after the rupture. A valve miles down the line may have stuck shut, causing a line-rupturing pressure wave to rattle back up the line until it found a weakness. A construction project years before may have made a line-weakening groove in the pipe.

That day, 277,000 gallons poured through a park, past a row of car dealerships and into downtown Bellingham. It looked like a river of gasoline, according to a firefighter who saw the gas before the explosion. The stretch drove people from their homes, creating a traffic jam.

Upstream, 18-year-old Liam Wood — who had just graduated from high school — was casting his line into the stream. Wade King and Stephen Tsioryas, both 10, celebrated the second-to-last day of the school year by going down to the creek and fooling around with a

## KEEPING SAFE

People living close to Kinder Morgan Energy Partners' high-pressure gasoline pipeline should know what to do in case the line ruptures. Here's the company's best advice:

- **Recognize a leak:** You might see a puddle on the ground or mist in the air; dead grass or bushes could mean an underground leak. The leak could sound like a hiss or a roar depending on the size. The smell of gas or diesel will probably hang in the air — but beware of any unusual smell near a pipeline.
- **Leave immediately:** Avoid creating a spark or a source of heat. Do not light a match, start an engine or even switch on a light. Move rapidly on foot, upwind if possible. Keep moving until you no longer smell gasoline.
- **Do not drive:** A spark from your car's ignition could ignite a vapor cloud.
- **Call for help:** Call 911, so police and fire agencies can clear the area and contain the spill. Call the pipeline's operations center at (213) 828-2447. Call collect, if necessary. Call anytime day or night, company officials say, and call immediately so pipeline operators can shut off the flow of gasoline.
- **For more information:** Call the pipeline's Lane County office, 689-1545, and request a brochure.

— Kinder Morgan Energy Partners and interviews

fireplace lighter. They probably provided the fatal spark.

Fireballs rolled up the creek bed. Explosions rattled windows. A black mushroom cloud rolled 5 miles over the city. "They'd better thank their lucky stars more people weren't killed," Carr said. "That park could have been full of people."

Wood was overcome by the fumes, fell into the creek and drowned. The two little boys were burned over 90 percent of their bodies. They lingered a day and then died.

The anguished mother of one of the boys asked how could such a thing happen?

"The potential is always there. The pipe is old, even though it's natural gas pipeline safety for the Oregon Public Utilities Commission. "Anything that man makes is going to break," he said.

"Mother Nature always sides with a flaw."

## Lax oversight?

The Bellingham explosion raised the questions: Are pipeline operators doing everything reasonable to protect the public? Are government regulators making sure of it?

Critics say not. The federal Office of Pipeline Safety is under attack from all sides. Critics accuse the agency of a reluctance to regulate pipeline operators on matters of public

safety. They say the agency is slow to pass even watered-down regulations — even those ordered by Congress.

Full-scale legislation is growing in Congress for a long-term investigation of the agency and review of pipeline regulations. If the agency had adopted proposed standards to ensure pipeline integrity, the Bellingham rupture might have been averted, Defazio said.

If the public knew more about high-pressure gasoline pipelines, Defazio said, they'd demand tougher regulations — even if it meant paying more at the gas pump.

"If these measures would drive up the price of gas by only one percent — which I don't think it would — it would be worth it," he said.

The National Transportation Safety Board may be the pipeline agency's toughest critic. At a week, Chairman Jim Hall told a congressional committee that agency inaction "continues to place the American people at risk. Four months ago, he told a Boston Globe reporter that the agency deserved a "Big Fat F on everything they've done."

The NTSB investigates pipeline accidents, writes recommendations about how to prevent them and then turns the recommendation over to the pipeline agency. Defazio has gotten scant response for a decade. At last count, 48 NTSB recommendations are awaiting action by the Office of Pipeline Safety.

NTSB recommended, for instance, that pipeline operators should be forced to conduct regular inspections on their lines. One promising method is to send a computerized device called a "smart pig" through the pipeline with the gasoline.

The smart pig measures the thickness and shape of the pipeline between connection pits and construction ditches.

Still, the Office of Pipeline Safety doesn't require the inspections — choosing instead to trust the judgment of the pipeline operators, agency spokeswoman Patricia Klinger said. "The operator knows their system the best, what the conditions are that their system goes through at any given time," she said.

In Oregon, that should mean frequent inspections, Defazio said, because the pipeline has been lying in moist Oregon soil for almost four decades. "When a system is old, you require more — and more intense — inspections," he said. "You don't assume that things are good."

Environmental groups are also frustrated with the Office of Pipeline Safety. In 1992, Congress expanded the agency's mission to include environmental protection as well as public safety.

By 1995, the agency was supposed to make up a list of sensitive areas traversed by the nation's pipelines, said Lois Epstein, an engineer for the Environmental Defense Fund, a nonprofit group with 250,000 members.

By 1995, the agency was to

propose requirements — such as inspections or more frequent — shut-off valves — to protect the sensitive areas. But by 1999, the agency hasn't even decided how to go about the task, Epstein said.

Riverbank owners are an industry run agency, which has failed to protect the public or the environment," said Susan Harper, the executive director of Cascade Columbia Alliance, a group fighting the expansion of a pipeline in Washington.

Any weaknesses in the federal system are magnified in Oregon because the state Legislature has passed a law to leave almost all regulation of the petroleum pipelines to the feds.

Other states help regulate the pipelines within their borders. In Washington, for instance, the state utilities commission has taken on the job. In California, it's the state fire marshal.

The Oregon Legislature, however, has decided to regulate only those parts of pipelines near navigable waters, meaning only around the Portland area, where the Columbia and Willamette rivers meet — no farther south than Oregon City.

Downstream from Oregon City, the state Department of Environmental Quality can inspect to ensure pipeline integrity. It has adequate contingency plans, shutdown procedures, training programs and equipment replacement schedules. Upriver, state officials can act only after a leak or spill.

"It's not enough," said Marsh, the DEQ director. The whole length of the pipeline should be regulated, he said. "It's a risk that ideally should be addressed," he said. "But it's not always possible to get dollars and authority from the Legislature."

With scanty regulations, the public has little ability to protect itself. "I don't know what the chairman of a national group seeking tighter regulation of the pipeline industry. "We really are at the mercy of the pipeline operators," he said.

## Close eyes on line

The good news in Lane County is that the local operators of the Kinder Morgan pipeline are highly regarded.

"These guys keep a real close eye on the pipeline," said Zollisch, the DEQ official in charge of pipelines.

The local crew is experienced. Carr, the area manager, has worked protecting pipelines for 30 years. The newest man on his 15-member team has six years of experience — most have 20 years or more. They are well-paid, earning more than \$50,000 a year. "We expect to lose some of them," Carr said.

Each year, they undergo an intense drill. "Each operator gets eight hours of me hammering at them," Carr said. He throws situations at them, asking what conditions they should report to the command center, what conditions they should bring to his attention — and what should cause them to immediately shut down the pipeline. "I expect a reasonable answer," Carr said.

Keeping the pipeline safe "is no mystery," Carr said. "You've got to do the right thing and know what you're doing."

Kinder Morgan is willing to spend money on safety measures, Carr said. Each week, a pilot in a Piper Cub flies the length of the pipeline — 200 feet off the ground — to look for construction activity that might threaten the pipeline or dead vegetation that might signal a corrosion leak.

In 1998, a pipeline was damaged during a train derailment. Thirteen days later, it explodes, killing two people and burning 11 homes to the ground.

■ **Mounds View, Minn.,** July 8, 1999. A Williams Pipeline Co. line running through a neighborhood ruptures and leaks gasoline in the early morning. A passing car ignites the fumes. The explosion burns two people to death and seriously injures a third



Smoke billows from the June 10 Whatcom Creek gasoline fire in Bellingham, Wash.

## WORST-CASE SPILLS

The oil and gasoline pipelines that supply the nation — and the nation's transportation, heating and manufacturing industries — have leaked 61 million gallons in the past decade, according to Cutter Information Corp., which tracks spills for industry and environmental groups. Here are some examples:

■ **Bellingham, Wash.,** June 10, 1999. The Olympic Pipe Line ruptures, spilling 277,000 gallons of gasoline into an urban creek. The vapor cloud ignites, and the explosion sends a mushroom cloud rolling six miles above the city. Two 15-year-olds playing on the creek bed are fatally burned. An 18-year-old, who is on the creek bank, falls into the water and drowns. The blaze destroys a 30-year-old, 1.5-mile swath of creek bed, where chinook salmon spawn.

■ **San Juan, Puerto Rico,** Nov. 21, 1996. An Enron Corp. pipeline carries a large amount of gasoline leaking. A store owner complains about the smell on several occasions, but workers can't find the leak. An explosion destroys the building that includes the store, killing 33 people and injuring 69 others.

■ **Kemp, Texas,** Aug. 24, 1996 — A Koch Industries pipeline carrying liquid butane ruptures. Two 12-year-olds smell the gas and jump into a pick-up truck to warn authorities. Sparks from the truck engine ignite the gas, and the explosion kills both teens. A fireball is seen 40 miles away.

■ **Greenville, S.C.,** June 26, 1995 — A Colonial Pipeline Co. line spills 957,600 gallons of diesel fuel into the Reedy River, killing 35,000 fish and polluting 23 miles of riverbed.

■ **Houston, Texas,** Oct. 20, 1994. An Enron pipeline ruptures, spilling 212,000 gallons of kerosene into the Rappahannock River. The spill — an incident in a decade — occurs 20 miles upriver from the city of Fredericksburg water intake, forcing the city to truck all of its water for a week. The city moves its water intake.

■ **Fredricksburg, Va.,** Dec. 18, 1989 — A Colonial Pipeline Co. line ruptures, spilling 212,000 gallons of kerosene into the Rappahannock River. The spill — an incident in a decade — occurs 20 miles upriver from the city of Fredericksburg water intake, forcing the city to truck all of its water for a week. The city moves its water intake.

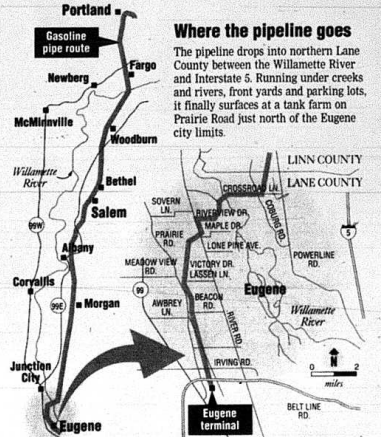
■ **Salem, Ore.,** Sept. 13, 1989 — A construction worker drives a bulldozer through a stream bed and breaks the Santa Fe Pipeline, spilling 30,000 gallons of gasoline into Mill Creek stream. Firefighters close streets and evacuate a trailer park as the stinging fumes wind along the creek through the city, exposing nearby neighborhoods to an immediate danger of fire, the Marion County district attorney said. The spill occurs during the salmon spawning season and kills 444 chinook salmon and 200 to 300 juvenile trout and steelhead. The pipeline, now owned by Kinder Morgan Energy Partners, is the major conduit of gasoline to Eugene.

■ **San Bernardino, Calif.,** May 25, 1989. A pipeline carrying gasoline during a train derailment. Thirteen days later, it explodes, killing two people and burning 11 homes to the ground.

■ **Mounds View, Minn.,** July 8, 1999. A Williams Pipeline Co. line running through a neighborhood ruptures and leaks gasoline in the early morning. A passing car ignites the fumes. The explosion burns two people to death and seriously injures a third

## Moving gasoline

Lane County drivers get nearly all of their gasoline from an 8-inch underground pipe that runs from Portland to Eugene, moving gasoline at eight times the pressure of a fire hose. The line passes near homes and businesses, and it crosses under rivers (six times) and creeks (28 times).



SOURCE: Kinder Morgan Energy Partners

## Where the pipeline goes

The pipeline drops into northern Lane County between the Willamette River and Interstate 5. Running under creeks and rivers, front yards and parking lots, it finally surfaces at a tank farm on Prairie Road just north of the Eugene city limits.

