

Citizen awareness key to gas pipeline issue

Created on Wednesday, 09 September 2015 09:47 | Written by [Shawn O'Neil](#) | 

[JW DISOUS VIEW COMMENTS](#)

I would like to thank the Wilsonville Spokesman and its reporter Jake Bartman for helping to raise public awareness concerning the 53-year-old Santa Fe Petroleum Pipeline that travels through our community. The key elements of pipeline safety are citizen awareness, transparency by both the regulator and pipeline owner and effective communication and planning by the responsible public and private stakeholders.

I also want to thank you for taking the time to correct an error in your website edition which did not make it into the paper edition, regarding the level of contact Kinder Morgan has had with Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue (TVF&R). In reality it has been very limited over the last 15 years. With the exception of Kinder Morgan, TVF&R is the key first responder for our community if there was a pipeline rupture. When I interviewed Deputy Morrow in October of last year he identified NW Natural Gas's interaction with TVF&R as the gold standard of cooperation, training and interaction with TVF&R. NW Natural Gas has their own pipeline infrastructure within our community. It is also regulated by the State of Oregon's Public Utility Commission.

I do not have any environmental or legislative agenda. I believe that pipelines, when monitored effectively, are a very important part of our infrastructure and a far better way to transport petroleum products than by truck or railroad. However, we no longer live in 1962. Our community has grown dramatically in the last several years. People are drawn to Wilsonville for the same reasons my family moved here: the quality of life, the schools and safety of our neighborhoods. Because of this rapid growth, the community's awareness of pipeline safety is more critical than ever before. I believe the communities of Bellingham, Washington, and San Bruno, California, would confirm this.

With over 24 years of experience representing both public and private institutions, I believe that there is always room for improvement, especially when it comes to communication, preparation and coordination among stakeholders with respect to public safety.

My inquiry into the pipeline began over 14 months ago. State and local stakeholders have been responsive to my public records requests, disclosing them in a timely manner. They have also taken the time to chat with me concerning these issues. TVF&R and the City of Wilsonville stand out in this regard.

In sharp contrast, Kinder Morgan has declined to provide any information claiming it is proprietary. Further, it has been over a year since I served a Freedom of Information Act Request on the federal regulator, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA). As of this date, I still have not received all the documents requested. PHMSA's attorney has advised that the remaining documents are still being reviewed and "redacted."

PHMSA representative Dave Mulligan has recently informed me that his agency is in the middle of an integrated inspection of the pipeline. This inspection has been going on for over a year. It is unknown when this inspection will be completed and when these records will be available.

It is my goal to secure and share this information to our community when it becomes available on my law firm's community outreach portal: shawnoneil.com/community-outreach-portal.html.

Shawn O'Neil is an attorney who lives and practices in Wilsonville.

0 Comments

Pamplin Media

 Login ▾

 Recommend

 Share

Sort by Best ▾



Start the discussion...

Be the first to comment.

 SPONSORED



 Subscribe

 Add Disqus to your site

 Privacy

[JW DISQUS BACK TO TOP](#)