PIPELINE QUESTIONS ANSWERED:

PREVENTATIVE PIPELINE MAINTENANCE

How do pipeline operators keep their pipelines operating safely?

Pipeline operators perform preventative maintenance on their pipelines to address potential issues before they become safety problems.

Addressing Issues Before They Become a Problem

Preventative maintenance allows pipeline operators to find and fix issues in their pipes before they become safety problems. Pipeline operators inspect their pipelines on regular schedules with high-tech diagnostic tools. Operators use the results of inspections to schedule and perform maintenance on the pipe.

Proactive Inspections Guide Maintenance

Pipeline operators use high-tech devices to scan their pipelines for potential issues. Inspection tools called “smart pigs” travel inside the pipe scanning the pipe wall for signs of dents, corrosion or possible cracking. Smart pigs use technology similar to an ultrasound or an MRI found at a doctor’s office. Handheld scanning devices allow operators in the field to confirm inspection results and guide maintenance plans.

Preventative Pipeline Maintenance

Pipeline operators perform preventative maintenance on their pipes to address potential issues before they become a problem. For example, an inspection may tell a pipeline operator a small amount of corrosion is starting to form on the pipe. It does not yet pose a problem for the pipe, but needs maintenance to remove and keep the pipe in safe condition.

During maintenance the pipeline operator may reapply protective coating, install a patch or sleeve around the pipe or replace that section of pipe.

Age Not an Issue with Proper Maintenance

Preventative maintenance allows a pipeline to continue operating safely over time. U.S. National Transportation Safety Board Chair Deborah Hersman confirmed, “If a pipeline is adequately maintained and inspected, age is not an issue.”

A technician scans pipe with ultrasonic imaging technology.

Preventative maintenance allows pipeline operators to keep their pipelines operating safely.