

PIPELINES AND THE PUBLIC

Introduction

Pipelines are essential for transporting natural gas and oil from producing wells to processing plants and facilities and, eventually, to consumers. They are clearly marked with distinctive marker posts and signs to avoid accidents because if damaged, the results could be very serious. You have an important role to play to ensure safety. Please, **call before you dig**.

The BC Oil and Gas Commission (Commission) has jurisdiction over most pipelines within provincial boundaries, those with over 100 pounds per square inch pressure (psi). The Commission reviews most pipeline and facility applications for projects on provincial and private lands. The rules pertaining to pipelines are defined in the *Provincial Pipeline Act*, *Petroleum and Natural Gas Act* (Part 3), *Railway Act* (Part 7) and their associated standards as described in the Canadian Standards Association's Z662.

Interprovincial pipelines are regulated by the National Energy Board and smaller distribution systems to homes and businesses are overseen by the British Columbia Utilities Commission and the BC Safety Authority.

The Pipeline Right-of-Way

A pipeline is installed within a strip of land referred to as a right-of-way, up to 18 metres wide. The pipeline company has acquired rights to use this land for the construction, operation and maintenance of its pipelines; however, ownership of the private land on which the right-of-way crosses remains with the landowner.

All activities within the right-of-way are governed by either Provincial or Federal regulations, and easement agreements negotiated between the landowner and the pipeline company.

To ensure safety, you will need to contact the company to get written approval for a number of different activities on the right-of-way. These activities include, but are not limited to:

- Operating vehicles or mobile equipment over the right-of-way where a roadway does not exist
- Reducing the depth of soil covering the pipeline
- Ploughing below 30 cm (1 foot)
- Ground leveling
- Installing drainage systems
- Augering
- Fencing

Call Before You Dig

Every time you dig in the ground, wherever it may be, you run the risk of loss of life or damage to property if you hit any of the many buried cables, conduits, gas or oil pipelines and/or other underground facilities that serve our cities, towns and rural areas. Calling **BC One Call** (1-800-474-6886) will help avoid potentially serious accidents and make the excavation safe and trouble free.

In addition to using **BC One Call**, you must call and obtain written approval from the pipeline company identified on the marker before mechanically excavating and constructing within the right-of-way or mechanically excavating within 30 metres (100 feet) of the right-of-way. If you are unable to reach an agreement with the pipeline company, contact the Commission at (250) 261-5700.

Did You Know?

- Unauthorized construction, installation of a facility or excavation over or near a pipeline is illegal.
- The pipeline company must inform you within 10-business days whether permission for your project has been granted or refused. If permission has been refused, the pipeline company must inform you of the reasons.
- The pipeline company has three business days to respond to a request to locate its pipeline.

What does Natural Gas Smell Like?

Natural gas smells like rotten eggs or sulphur for a good reason. Natural gas is odourless at the wellhead where it is produced, but trace amounts of a chemical called mercaptan, which has a distinctive rotten egg or sulphur-like odour, is added. If there is ever gas leak, we all recognize that distinctive smell.

Do You Suspect a Leak?

If you suspect the pipeline is transporting natural gas and if you:

- Smell an odour like rotten eggs, and/or
- Hear a loud whistling sound, and/or
- See a steam-like cloud or what looks like frost on the ground

This could be a natural gas leak and you should:

- Leave the area on foot immediately
- Once you are a safe distance from the leak, call 911 and follow their instructions.

Safety Checklist

1. **Plan your activity** identify the precise location of your work; check records for evidence of pipeline easements or other buried facilities.
2. **Visit the site** and look for pipeline warning signs or pipeline marker posts.
3. **Contact the pipeline company** and obtain a copy of the pipeline company's guidelines for ground disturbances.
4. **Obtain** the pipeline company's written approval for the crossing.
5. **Make a locate request** (by calling the one-call centre where a one-call centre exists or by calling the pipeline company where there is no one-call centre) to have the pipeline located.
6. **Be on site** when the pipe is located and know the meaning of the pipeline markers.
7. **Give 3 working days** notice to the pipeline company prior to the commencement of the approved activity unless otherwise agreed on by the pipeline company and the applicant.
8. **Hand expose the pipe** prior to any ground disturbance within 3 metres of the pipe.
9. **Notify the pipeline company** one working day before backfilling over the pipe.
10. **IMMEDIATELY NOTIFY THE PIPELINE COMPANY IF YOU COME IN TO CONTACT WITH THE PIPE.**
11. **ALWAYS** follow the instructions of a pipeline company representative.

Contact the Commission

Each excavation or construction activity is unique. If you need further assistance with any excavation or construction activity near a provincially-regulated pipeline, please call us at (250) 261-5700.

Contraventions of the *Pipeline Act* of B.C. are reportable to the Commission. WorksafeBC or law enforcement authorities may take formal action against persons committing unauthorized work on pipeline right-of-ways.

National Energy Board (NEB) Responsibilities

The NEB is a federal agency that regulates the construction and operation of pipelines that cross provincial or national boundaries. The NEB is responsible for ensuring that appropriate emergency response plans are in place for pipelines under its jurisdiction. One of the NEB's obligations is to promote safety, environmental protection, and environmental efficiency in the

Canadian public interest. The Commission and the NEB have a Memorandum of Understanding that enables effective collaboration in the event of pipeline incident investigation and/or emergency response.

Remember:

- Pipeline signs and marker posts do not indicate the exact location of a pipeline or right-of-way.
- **ALWAYS call before you dig.**

Information:

B.C. One Call
www.bconecall.bc.ca/

BC Oil and Gas Commission
www.ogc.bc.ca

British Columbia Pipeline Act
www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/P/96364_01.htm

Canadian Centre for Energy Information -- Pipelines Booklet
www.centreforenergy.com/Shopping/product.asp?ProductKey=75

Canadian Centre for Energy Information -- Pipelines 101
www.centreforenergy.com/silos/ong/Pipelines101-Intro.asp

Pacific Northern Gas Ltd.
www.png.ca/

Terasen's Guidelines for Excavation Safety
www.terasengas.com/_Safety/CallBeforeYouDig/default.htm

B.C. Common Ground Alliance
www.commongroundbc.ca/

Call Before You Dig - Provincial Call Centre

B.C. One Call: 1-800-474-6886 (cellular *6886)

www.bconecall.bc.ca