

What FERC Does

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, or FERC, is an independent agency that regulates the interstate transmission of electricity, natural gas, and oil. FERC also reviews proposals to build liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals and interstate natural gas pipelines as well as licensing hydropower projects. The Energy Policy Act of 2005 gave FERC additional responsibilities as outlined in FERC's Top Initiatives and updated Strategic Plan. As part of that responsibility, FERC:

- Regulates the transmission and wholesale sales of electricity in interstate commerce;
- Reviews certain mergers and acquisitions and corporate transactions by electricity companies;
- Regulates the transmission and sale of natural gas for resale in interstate commerce;
- Regulates the transportation of oil by pipeline in interstate commerce;
- Approves the siting and abandonment of interstate natural gas pipelines and storage facilities;
- Reviews the siting application for electric transmission projects under limited circumstances;
- Ensures the safe operation and reliability of proposed and operating LNG terminals;
- Licenses and inspects private, municipal, and state hydroelectric projects;
- Protects the reliability of the high voltage interstate transmission system through mandatory reliability standards;
- Monitors and investigates energy markets;
- Enforces FERC regulatory requirements through imposition of civil penalties and other means;
- Oversees environmental matters related to natural gas and hydroelectricity projects and other matters; and
- Administers accounting and financial reporting regulations and conduct of regulated companies.

What FERC Does Not Do

(Note: most of the links below are to external websites and you will be leaving FERC's site)

Many areas outside of FERC's jurisdictional responsibility are dealt with by State Public Utility Commissions. Areas considered outside of FERC's responsibility include:

- Regulation of retail electricity and natural gas sales to consumers;
- Approval for the physical construction of electric generation facilities;

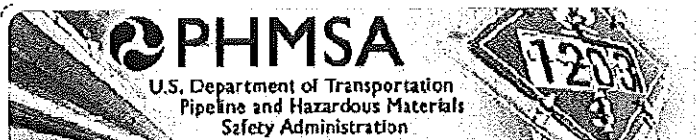
QUICK LINKS

FAQs: About FERC
Processes
Electric
Natural Gas
Hydro

An Overview of the FERC and
Federal Regulation of Public
Utilities in the United States
[FERC](#)

- Regulation of activities of the municipal power systems, federal power marketing agencies like the [Tennessee Valley Authority](#), and most rural electric cooperatives;
- Regulation of nuclear power plants by the [Nuclear Regulatory Commission](#);
- Issuance of State Water Quality Certificates;
- Oversight for the construction of oil pipelines;
- Abandonment of service as related to oil facilities;
- Mergers and acquisitions as related to natural gas and oil companies;
- Responsibility for [pipeline safety](#) or for pipeline transportation on or across the Outer Continental Shelf;
- Regulation of local distribution pipelines of natural gas;
- Development and operation of natural gas vehicles;
- Reliability problems related to failures of local distribution facilities; and
- Tree trimmings near local distribution power lines in residential neighborhoods.

Updated: February 3, 2012



Careers | Contact Us | FAQs | Site Map

Advanced Search

For the Public

Hazmat Safety Community

Pipeline Safety Community

Briefing Room

Doing Business with PHMSA

- About Us
- Calendar
- Contact Us
- Data & Statistics
- Drug & Alcohol Testing
- Enforcement
- Federal and State Partners
- Initiatives
- Inspection
- Integrity Management Program (IMP)
- Library
- NTSB Safety Recommendations
- Online Data Entry
- Stakeholder Communications
- Standards & Rulemakings
- Research & Development
- Security
- State Programs
- Technical Advisory Committees
- Inspector Training & Qualifications Division

[Home](#) » [Pipeline Safety Community](#) » [Library](#) » [FAQs](#)

Safe Pipelines FAQs

Questions and answers about the safety of our Nation's pipelines.

1. [How safe are pipelines? What are the statistics?](#)
2. [What is done to keep pipelines safe?](#)
3. [I understand a major cause of pipeline accidents is careless digging. What is being done to solve this problem?](#)
4. [What other things are in the future to improve pipeline safety?](#)
5. [What can I do to help keep pipelines safe?](#)
6. [What is a pipeline right-of-way?](#)
7. [How can I tell where a pipeline is located?](#)
8. [Are pipeline markers always placed on top of a pipeline?](#)
9. [How does a pipeline operator determine if a leak or rupture has occurred?](#)
10. [At what temperature do Natural Gas Pipelines freeze?](#)
11. [Since a Natural Gas Pipeline won't freeze unless there is a large quantity of water involved, what should someone do if a Natural Gas Pipeline freezes?](#)
12. [How are routes for new pipelines determined?](#)

Home

About PHMSA

- Mission and Goals
- About the Agency
- Key Officials
- Organization
- Calendar

Promoting Safety & Security

- Regulations
- Special Permits & Approvals
- International Standards
- Security
- Initiatives

1. How safe are pipelines? What are the statistics?

Pipelines are the safest and most cost-effective means to transport the extraordinary volumes of natural gas and hazardous liquid products that fuel our economy. To move the volume of even a modest pipeline, it would take a constant line of tanker trucks, about 750 per day, loading up and moving out every two minutes, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The railroad-equivalent of this single pipeline would be a train of seventy-five 2,000-barrel tank rail cars everyday. These alternatives would require many times the people, clog the air with engine pollutants, be prohibitively expensive and -- with many more vehicles on roads and rails carrying hazardous materials -- unacceptably dangerous.

Relative to the volumes of products transported, pipelines are extremely safe when compared to other modes of energy transportation. Oil pipeline spills amount to about 1 gallon per million barrel-miles (Association of Oil Pipelines). One barrel, transported one mile, equals one barrel-mile, and there are 42 gallons in a barrel. In household terms, this is less than one teaspoon of oil spilled per thousand barrel-miles.

Pipelines also generally have a better safety record (deaths, injuries, fires/explosions) than other modes of oil transportation. For example, compared to the pipeline record, there are 87 times more oil transport truck-related deaths, 35 times more oil

Encouraging Compliance

Training Resources
 Outreach
 Inspections & Enforcement
 Drug & Alcohol Testing

Supporting Community Response

Preparedness & Response
 State Programs & Grants
 Incident Reporting

PHMSA Resources

Data & Statistics
 eForms
 ePayments
 Glossary
 Library

transport truck related fires/explosions, and twice as many oil transport truck-related injuries.

Pipeline statistics for calendar year 2002 report 139 liquid pipeline accidents resulted in the loss of about 97,000 barrels and about \$31 million in property damage, but no deaths nor injuries. Natural gas transmission line accidents in 2002 resulted in one death and five injuries.

For more statistics visit our [statistics](#) pages.

2. What is done to keep pipelines safe?

Pipelines are operated under a variety of Federal and state regulations and industry standards intended to ensure public and environmental safety and health. These regulations and standards address all aspects of pipeline operations, including where they are built; how they are built, operated and maintained; how they are tested; and what programs and procedures operators must use to ensure the integrity of their pipelines and their operation.

Pipeline operators are inspected by both Federal and state pipeline safety inspectors to ensure they meet or exceed these regulatory requirements and standards. Additionally, there are various government organizations, such as the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and private citizens groups that monitor the operation of pipelines and make recommendations for improvements and changes.

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the pipeline operator to ensure the safety of its pipelines. Pipeline operators follow regulatory guidance and industry standards in maintaining and operating their pipelines.

3. I understand a major cause of pipeline accidents is careless digging. What is being done to solve this problem?

PHMSA and the pipeline industry have made significant progress in prevention of damage to pipelines by careless digging and other construction activity. Working together, we formed and support a non-profit organization to represent those with interests in underground rights-of-way. The Common Ground Alliance (CGA), comprised of underground utility industries implemented the "Dig Safely" campaign, to create awareness of the vulnerability of pipelines to such activity as construction and the damage that can result from careless backhoe operations, for example. CGA is continuing the awareness and education campaigns, see <http://www.commongroundalliance.com>.

Since the "Dig Safely" campaign and establishment of CGA, and during a period of years when new construction was significantly increasing, the number of accidents caused by outside force has decreased.

The Pipeline Safety Improvement Act of 2002 provides authority for the establishment of a national "one-call" system which was implemented as the Call 8-1-1 program in 2007. The centralized center gives construction and utility crews one place to call before they dig, to coordinate and ensure that they will not damage the various underground utilities. Read more about it at the [Call 8-1-1 website](#).

4. What other things are in the future to improve pipeline safety?

Even though pipeline transportation is the safest and most economical means of transportation for our nation's energy products, PHMSA and pipeline operators are engaged in research to identify and develop more effective means of ensuring the safety of energy pipelines. Research and development (R&D) efforts are looking at: damage prevention and leak detection technologies, enhanced operations, controls, and monitoring, and improved material performance.

Read more about [Pipeline R&D](#).

5. What can I do to help keep pipelines safe?

Become aware of the presence of pipelines in your area. Know what to look for to

recognize a pipeline emergency or unusual pipeline condition. Know what to do and who to contact in the event of a pipeline emergency. Anyone planning to dig, especially in an area that appears to be a pipeline right-of-way or where the presence of a pipeline is suspected, should call 8-1-1 at least 72 hours in advance of beginning the excavation.

These calls are extremely important as they can help avoid pipeline ruptures resulting from digging which is a major cause of pipeline accidents. Based on the excavation location information provided in the call to the one-call center, the pipeline owner (and the owners of other nearby underground utilities) will be notified. The pipeline operator will locate and mark the specific location of the pipeline relative to the location of the planned excavation.

Read more about it at the [Call 8-1-1 website](#).

6. What is a pipeline right-of-way?

A pipeline right-of-way is a strip of land over and around pipelines where some of the property owner's legal rights have been granted to a pipeline company. A right-of-way agreement between the pipeline company and the property owner is also called an easement and is usually filed in the public records with property deeds.

Rights-of-ways and easements provide a permanent, limited interest in the land that enables the pipeline company to operate, test, inspect, repair, maintain, replace, and protect one or more pipelines on property owned by others. The agreement may vary the rights and widths of the right-of-way, but generally, the pipeline company's right-of-ways extend 25 feet from each side of a pipeline unless special conditions exist.

7. How can I tell where a pipeline is located?

Since pipelines are usually buried underground, line markers and warning signs like the ones shown below are used to indicate their approximate location along the pipeline route. The markers and warning signs are in high-visibility colors (yellow or orange) and are located at frequent intervals along the pipeline right-of-way. The markers can be found where a pipeline intersects a street, highway, railway, or waterway, and at other prominent points along the route. The markers display the material transported in the line, the name of the pipeline operator, and a telephone number where the operator can be reached in the event of an emergency. Pumping stations, tank farms, and cleared rights-of-way also help signal that a pipeline is located nearby.



Pipeline right-of-ways are well marked to help prevent damage from digging, the most common cause of pipeline accidents. Anyone planning to dig, especially in an area that appears to be a pipeline right-of-way or where the presence of a pipeline is suspected, should contact the 8-1-1 one-call center at least 72 hours in advance of beginning the excavation.

These calls are extremely important as they can help avoid pipeline ruptures resulting from digging which is the largest single cause of pipeline accidents. Based on the excavation location information provided in the call to the one-call center, the pipeline owner (and the owners of other nearby underground utilities) will be notified.

The pipeline operator will locate and mark the specific location of the pipeline relative to the location of the planned excavation.

8. Are pipeline markers always placed on top of a pipeline?

No. Markers and warning signs only indicate the general location of a pipeline. They cannot be relied upon to indicate the exact position of the pipeline they mark. Also, the pipeline may not follow a straight course between markers. And, while markers are helpful in locating pipelines, they are limited in the information they provide. They provide no information, for example, about the depth or number of pipelines in the vicinity. Contact the pipeline operator or the 8-1-1 one-call center for help in determining the specific location of a pipeline prior to beginning any excavation.

9. How does a pipeline operator determine if a leak or rupture has occurred?

Many leak detection systems and methods are used in the operation of pipelines, and, generally, a single pipeline will employ several of these. For example, sensitive instruments are monitored to detect conditions such as a drop in pressure or a change in the flow rate that might indicate a rupture. Also, lines are frequently inspected on foot, by car, or from aircraft.

Leaks rarely occur but many that do are the result of damage caused by someone digging near the pipeline. Most of these damages can be prevented by notifying the pipeline operator or by calling the national 8-1-1 one-call system before beginning an excavation to determine the location of nearby pipelines. The pipeline operator will determine and mark the specific location of the pipeline relative to the location of the planned excavation. Remember, there may be numerous pipelines in the vicinity of a pipeline marker at different depths.

10. At what temperature do Natural Gas Pipelines freeze?

11. Since a Natural Gas Pipeline won't freeze unless there is a large quantity of water involved, what should someone do if a Natural Gas Pipeline freezes?

Water freezing in pipelines is only a possibility for services on gas distribution systems. Pressures and flow are too high on gas distribution mains and gas transmission systems. Freezing would only be discovered when it obstructs gas flow, which would result in a no-gas call to the operator. The operator would need to remove or melt the ice to restore gas flow.

You can find more information about pipelines, gas distribution systems, and operations at our [Stakeholder Communication site](#).

12. How are routes for new pipelines determined?

Natural Gas Pipelines

For natural gas pipelines, project planning begins with the basics of supply and demand. Generally, if there is a demand for natural gas, pipeline companies conduct a market analysis to estimate the size of the market. This gas supply requirement is typically expressed in terms of million cubic feet of gas per day. With this information engineers can begin to estimate the facilities required to transport the required volumes of gas and the cost to construct the pipeline facilities.

Engineers initially identify preliminary pipeline routes that will minimize impact to the public, public landowners and the environment. The pipeline company typically will go through a process of reviewing available maps of the region to be traversed, and available published environmental data to determine a number of possible alternatives, depending on the characteristics of the region. This desktop work will then be augmented by use of aerial and ground reconnaissance, to identify and select a preferred route.

Once a preferred route is identified, the pipeline company will begin contacting landowners to discuss the project and seek permission to conduct civil and environmental surveys. These surveys are required for use in the detailed pipeline design and for preparing local, state and federal permit applications. Even though pipeline officials may begin discussions with landowners at this point, it is important to remember that the project is undergoing a feasibility analysis, and neither the

project nor the pipeline route is finalized at this time.

Selecting a pipeline route often involves discussing and evaluating options with landowners, environmental agencies and regulatory officials. If the market analysis ultimately justifies the cost of pipeline construction, only then will the pipeline company begin seeking permits and preparing a detailed project application for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

Oil Pipelines

For oil pipelines, potential routes are also initially suggested by demand patterns, including:

- The predicted required flow of crude oil from a producing field to a refinery complex
- The expected flow of refined products from a refinery complex to population centers or markets.

Oil pipeline route alternatives are then determined on the basis of studies of the cost of construction, projected growth in population centers, demand for transportation service over a period of time, and rates that are competitive and provide a reasonable return on investment.

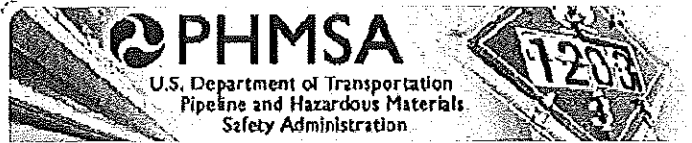
Once alternatives have been analyzed, an environmental study helps to select the most feasible option in terms of protecting the safety of the environment and the safety of those who live in the vicinity of the proposed pipeline right-of-way. These environmental studies generally follow procedures set out by federal and state law, sometimes resulting in Environmental Impact Statements or Environmental Assessments that are published in draft form for public comment.

Finally, permissions must be obtained to use an easement corridor, the pipeline right-of-way. Owners of private and public property negotiate with the pipeline companies and sign leases for the use of their land.

Review an [expansive discussion of pipelines](#) or read more [Pipeline FAQs](#).

Last Updated: Aug 29, 2007

[Careers](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [No Fear](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [FOIA](#) | [Accessibility](#) | [FAQs](#) | [Web Policies](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Download Acrobat](#)



Careers | Contact Us | FAQs | Site Map



Advanced Search

For the Public

Hazmat Safety Community

Pipeline Safety Community

Briefing Room

Doing Business with PHMSA

- About Us
- Calendar
- Contact Us
- Data & Statistics
- Drug & Alcohol Testing Enforcement
- Federal and State Partners
- Initiatives
- Inspection
- Integrity Management Program (IMP)
- Library
- NTSB Safety Recommendations
- Online Data Entry
- Stakeholder Communications
- Standards & Rulemakings
- Research & Development
- Security
- State Programs
- Technical Advisory Committees
- Inspector Training & Qualifications Division

[Home](#) » [Pipeline Safety Community](#) » [Library](#) » [FAQs](#)

PHMSA and Pipelines FAQs

What PHMSA does for pipeline safety and who else may have authority over pipelines.

1. [What's PHMSA's role regarding Pipeline Safety?](#)
2. [How many inspectors are with PHMSA's Office of Pipeline Safety?](#)
3. [What does the Pipeline Safety, Regulatory Certainty, and Job Creation Act of 2011 provide?](#)
4. [What is Integrity Management of pipelines?](#)
5. [What's the latest on Pipeline Regulations?](#)
6. [What other Federal agencies have authority or interests in pipelines?](#)

1. What's PHMSA's role regarding Pipeline Safety?

Pipelines are among the safest and least costly ways of transporting large quantities of energy products essential to our economy. However, pipeline failures can kill and injure people, damage property, harm the environment and disrupt energy supplies. PHMSA's job is to protect people and the environment from pipeline failures by:

- Analyzing pipeline safety and accident data
- Evaluating which safety standards need improvement and where new rulemakings are needed
- Setting and enforcing regulations and standards for the design, construction, operation, maintenance or abandonment of pipelines by pipeline companies
- Educating operators, states and communities on how to keep pipelines safe
- Facilitating research & development into better pipeline technologies
- Training state and federal pipeline inspectors
- Administering grants to states and localities for pipeline inspections, damage prevention and emergency response.

2. How many inspectors are with PHMSA's Office of Pipeline Safety?

PHMSA has managed to increase its inspection and enforcement staff to the limits of its authority. Specifically, the Pipeline Safety Program has an authorized strength of 151 Inspection and Enforcement (I&E) employees, 90 of which are pipeline inspector positions spread across five regional offices. This administration has supported the largest percentage increase for PHMSA resources in the Fiscal Year 2013 Budget Request.

Home



- Mission and Goals
- About the Agency
- Key Officials
- Organization
- Calendar

Promoting Safety & Security

- Regulations
- Special Permits & Approvals
- International Standards
- Security
- Initiatives

Encouraging Compliance

Training Resources
 Outreach
 Inspections & Enforcement
 Drug & Alcohol Testing

Supporting Community Response

Preparedness & Response
 State Programs & Grants
 Incident Reporting

PHMSA Resources

Data & Statistics
 eForms
 ePayments
 Glossary
 Library

3. What does the Pipeline Safety, Regulatory Certainty, and Job Creation Act of 2011 provide?

PHMSA drafted an Administration legislative initiative for program reauthorization entitled, "Strengthening Pipeline Safety and Enforcement Act of 2010 (Act)." The proposal led to the Pipeline Safety, Regulatory Certainty, and Job Creation Act of 2011, which was signed into law by President Obama on January 3, 2012, and provides a number of strong pipeline safety measures, including:

1. Increases the maximum administrative civil penalties from \$100,000 per day/\$1 million for a series of violations to \$200,000 per day/\$2 million for a series of violations;
2. Grants authority, for the first time, to enforce oil spill response plans required of pipeline operators under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990;
3. Requires technical studies and analysis of leak detection systems, diluted bitumen, and excavation damage on pipeline safety;
4. Requires new regulations for the use of automatic or remotely controlled shut-off valves on new or replaced transmission pipelines;
5. Requires new regulations for tests to confirm material strength of previously untested gas transmission pipelines in high consequence areas (HCAs);
6. Requires regulations to confirm appropriate records to confirm maximum allowable operating pressures on gas transmission pipelines in highly populated or high consequence areas;
7. Requires a review of whether integrity management regulations should be expanded outside of high consequence areas;
8. Requires a review and report to Congress on existing Federal and State regulations for all types of gathering pipelines;
9. Requires a survey of the nation's progress in replacing cast iron gas pipelines;
10. Requires actions to increase state and local emergency responder awareness of the National Pipeline Mapping System;
11. Limits incorporation by reference into regulation of any document that is not made publicly available free of charge on the internet website; and
12. Provides for consultation with and technical assistance for Indian tribes regarding the regulation of pipelines subject to tribe jurisdiction.

For updates or to review PHMSA's progress in improving pipeline safety, visit the [Pipeline Safety Update](#).

4. What is Integrity Management of pipelines?

Previous concepts of pipeline maintenance and inspection focused on the pipeline itself, investigating chiefly a pipeline's physical qualities, supporting systems and the administration of an operator's inspection program.

Integrity Management takes a broader view, encompassing the environment as well as pipeline. Pipeline operators are required to know more about the areas their pipeline traverses; the nature of the population in the area; the existence of environmentally sensitive areas near the pipeline. Fundamentally, Integrity Management seeks to understand the potential consequences of failure of a specific pipeline in a particular area. It sets priorities for inspection and operations and maintenance based on whether people, property or the environment might be at risk should a pipeline failure occur.

Regulations for Integrity Management of hazardous liquid pipelines have been in effect since 2001. Natural gas pipeline integrity management in High Consequence Areas (HCA) is currently being reviewed as a proposed rulemaking in the Office of Pipeline Safety and is expected to become a final rule later in 2003. For more information on integrity management please check <http://primis.phmsa.dot.gov/iim/>

5. What's the latest on Pipeline Regulations?

You may access the most recent pipeline safety rulemakings on the [Standards & Rulemakings page](#). Advisory bulletins and general notices are also available on Standards & Rulemakings from the right side mini-menu. Rulemakings are also published in the [Federal Register](#).

6. What other Federal agencies have authority or interests in pipelines?

Partnership, coordination and cooperation at all levels are keys to success in protecting this essential part of our critical national infrastructure. While PHMSA is the federal pipeline safety authority, others have responsibilities or interests in pipelines. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has responsibility for coordinating security for all transportation related operations, including pipelines. Both the Department of Energy (DOE), with responsibilities for energy supplies and refinery operations, and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) with responsibilities for natural gas regulation, depend upon the safe, secure and reliable operation of the nation's pipelines.

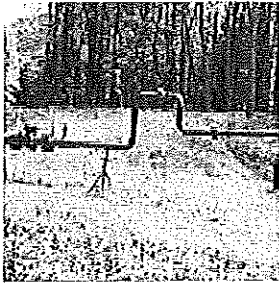
PHMSA works closely with DOE, DHS/TSA and FERC, as well as state and local governments and industry to ensure our nation has a pipeline infrastructure that is worthy of the confidence of the American people.

Review an [expansive discussion of pipelines](#) or read more [Pipeline FAQs](#).

Last Updated: Aug 29, 2007

[Careers](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [No Fear](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [FOIA](#) | [Accessibility](#) | [FAQs](#) | [Web Policies](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Download Acrobat](#)

TOPICS

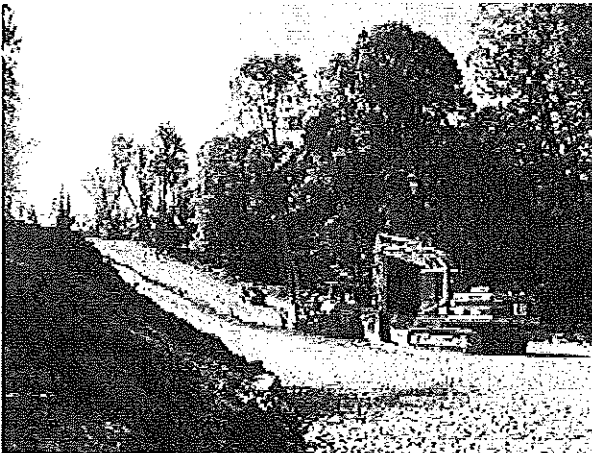


Your Guide to Pipelines in Pennsylvania

[View All Topics »](#)

BACKGROUND

-
-



KIM PAYNTER / WHY/NEWSWORKS.ORG

Workers prepare to lay a new Marcellus Shale gas pipeline in Susquehanna County, Pa.

Thousands of miles of new pipelines in Pennsylvania will have to be built to transport Marcellus Shale gas. The new pipeline construction will benefit those in need of jobs, and the companies that do the building. But some residents and local politicians worry about the environmental impacts, and say the current regulatory structure needs updating.

Nobody knows how many miles of pipeline already exists in the state. That's because Pennsylvania does not have one regulatory authority that oversees intrastate gas pipelines. In fact, out of 31 states that produce natural gas, Alaska is the only other state, besides Pennsylvania, that doesn't.

Pennsylvania's **Public Utility Commission** does inspect about 46,000 miles of pipelines that are categorized as public utilities. That means those pipelines deliver gas directly to a consumer. The PUC has eight inspectors who enforce both state and federal regulations.

The federal government, through the Department of Transportation, regulates the interstate pipeline system. Those are the pipelines that travel across state boundaries. One example would be the Transcontinental Gas Pipeline, or Transco, which travels from south Texas to the major east coast markets of New Jersey and New York City.

Until recently, thousands of miles of what are called "gathering lines" did not fall under the jurisdiction of the Public Utilities Commission. And the Department of Transportation's **Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration** did not have the resources to inspect them. PHMSA asked Pennsylvania to broaden the PUC's jurisdiction to include these lines. That was also one of the recommendations made by the **Marcellus Shale Commission**.

In December, 2011, Gov. Corbett signed the **Gas and Hazardous Liquids Pipeline Act**, also known as Act 127, which grants the **Public Utilities Commission** jurisdiction over most of the state's 886 miles of intrastate pipelines. Rural pipelines, known as Class 1 are exempt from the PUC's safety inspections. The PUC has hired five new inspectors and two supervisors. The Commission will also develop a registry of pipelines and their operators in the state.

To build a pipeline, rights of way need to be secured from private and public landowners. The companies pay for those rights of way. Then permits are needed. But a confusing network of regulatory bodies handles the permitting process. **The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission** has to approve any interstate pipeline. The Public Utilities Commission has to approve any that serve consumers directly. But few of the new gas lines connected to **Marcellus Shale** drilling fall neatly into either of those categories.

If the pipeline runs through wetlands or cross waterways, permits are needed from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. Also, the DEP has oversight if the pipelines cross through areas with endangered or rare species. Sometimes county, or local, level regulations come into play, but not always. Pennsylvania's new drilling law, ACT 13, restricted local governments from implementing zoning rules for natural gas development, including pipelines. But that provision is still tied up in the courts.