

How can I trust that pipeline companies are fully prepared for an emergency?

About Pipelines is a series, dedicated to sharing the facts about transmission pipelines in Canada and their role in Canadians' lives. This information is provided by the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association (CEPA).

Myth

MYTH VS. FACT

Emergency response

Canada's pipelines are old and unsafe.

FACT: The industry closely monitors all pipelines to maintain its 99.999 per cent safety record.

Myth

Pipeline operators don't clean up their spills.

FACT: Companies are 100 per cent responsible for response, cleaning and restoration.

Myth

The industry is not prepared for a significant incident.

FACT: Pipeline companies are closely audited and regulated to ensure emergency preparedness.

Because they are buried underground, it can be easy to overlook transmission pipelines as critical infrastructure in Canada. But every day (with the exception of electricity), virtually all of Canada's energy is transported by underground transmission pipelines, delivering 97 per cent of our onshore crude oil and natural gas production.

The seeming invisibility of these 'energy highways' is a direct result of the safety efforts pipeline operators put into every aspect of pipeline operations. One of the most important safety measures the industry has in place is being prepared for an emergency.

Planning for the unplanned

Emergencies are a rare occurrence for Canada's pipelines. In fact, in 2015, CEPA members had a 99.999 per cent safety record. But pipelines aren't completely risk-free, and the industry is focused on being prepared to quickly and effectively respond to an emergency, with the goals of protecting the public and the environment, reducing any risks and hazards,

and cleaning up and restoring the site.

At the center of effective emergency preparedness is an Emergency Response Plan (ERP). These comprehensive plans outline all the necessary, specific steps and decisions required to manage a pipeline emergency situation and control the incident. An ERP basically provides pipeline operators and emergency responders with a roadmap to help them make effective and informed decisions about how to handle the situation.

Every emergency is different, and pipeline operators have to take many things into account before making a decision.



What's inside an ERP?

Some of the critical information in an Emergency Response Plan includes:

- Evacuation plans
- Emergency worker response procedures
- Roles, responsibilities and chain of command
- Locations of access points along the pipeline
- Communication processes
- Coordination procedures with emergency services, governments and local authorities



Emergency Response

These plans provide guidance on how to handle the emergency, based on considerations like how close the emergency is to communities, waterways and wildlife, the type of product, the amount spilled and the time it takes to get emergency responders on scene.

Canada’s regulatory agencies require every pipeline operator to have ERPs, and these are routinely updated and submitted to the regulator for reviews and audits. If a pipeline crosses provincial borders, it’s the National Energy Board who regulates and audits the plans; if the pipeline resides within a province, it’s the provincial regulator.

In addition, CEPA members frequently hold training and emergency response exercises, consult with organizations and agencies involved in emergency response and communicate with employees, the public and first responders on their practices and procedures.

Coordinating an effective response

In the case of large incidents, CEPA members use the Incident Command System (ICS), which is a management system used for the command, control and coordination of emergency response. By using ICS, pipeline companies can effectively respond to an emergency while ensuring that resources are being used efficiently and the public and emergency responders are safe.

While ICS is a standardized system that is used around the world, CEPA members have also committed to an industry first – the Mutual Emergency Assistance Agreement.

This agreement formalizes and legalizes an existing practice – allowing any one of CEPA’s member companies to ask for assistance from another member company in the event of a major incident. By sharing resources like equipment, personnel or specialized response advice, it increases the speed in which CEPA members can effectively manage an incident.

Striving for zero incidents

Pipelines are one of the safest and most reliable means of transporting large volumes of crude oil, natural gas and petroleum products. And the industry wants to make them even safer – with a goal of zero incidents. To achieve this, CEPA members participate in CEPA Integrity First, a program that is enhancing the industry’s performance in pipeline safety, environmental protection and socio-economic practices.

Emergencies are something pipeline operators are committed to always being prepared for, but they are equally focused on ensuring these emergencies don’t occur in the first place.

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aboutpipelines.com/en/emergencyresponse

LEARN MORE
about the Mutual Emergency Assistance Agreement at aboutpipelines.com/en/emergency-response/mutual-emergency-assistance-agreement/



What is it?

- It’s a standardized emergency management system that was developed in response to a series of wildfires in southern California in the 1970s.
- In the past 40 years, its use has spread throughout the world, including Canada.
- In addition to CEPA member companies, the Canadian Coast Guard, Parks Canada and the Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada are some of the organizations who follow this standardized system.

Learn more at:
icscanada.ca



PIPELINE OPERATORS are required to conduct regular emergency response exercises.

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