

Pipeline Oversight

The Role of Government Agencies for Pennsylvania Pipeline Projects

Federal Government

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)

FERC regulates the siting of interstate natural gas transmission pipelines. While FERC does not draft environmental or safety standards for interstate natural gas pipelines (that is the responsibility of other agencies), its permitting process ensures that owners and operators will adhere to all applicable federal or state environmental and safety requirements.

United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) Pipeline & Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA)

PHMSA is responsible for adopting safety standards for natural gas pipelines which fall under federal jurisdiction. Pipelines are typically designated by class (1-4), as determined by proximity to occupied buildings:

Class Designation	Location Features
Class 1	An offshore area or any location with 10 or fewer buildings intended for human occupancy within 220 yards on either side of the centerline of any continuous one mile length of pipeline.
Class 2	Any location with more than 10 but fewer than 46 buildings intended for human occupancy within 220 yards on either side of the centerline of any continuous one mile length of pipeline.
Class 3	Any location with more than 46 buildings intended for human occupancy within 220 yards on either side of the centerline of any continuous one mile length of pipeline or an area where the pipeline lies within 100 yards of either a building or a small, well-defined outside area (such as a playground) that is occupied by 20 or more persons at least five days a week for 10 weeks in any 12-month period.
Class 4	Any location where unit buildings with four or more stories above ground are prevalent.

The agency is responsible for safety inspections, as well as administering and partnering with state agencies, such as the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PA PUC), to inspect pipelines and respond to emergencies. Currently, PHMSA has adopted safety standards for all pipelines except Class 1 gathering lines. USDOT has evaluated this issue several times in the past, and once again is considering the establishment of safety standards for these pipelines.

United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

USACE, in consultation with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP), reviews pipeline projects which may impact jurisdictional waters of the United States. The USACE ensures that projects involving waterway or wetland crossings which are under its jurisdiction are in compliance with all applicable federal and state water quality protection standards.

State Government



Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PA PUC)

Under Act 127 of 2011, the Gas and Hazardous Liquids Pipelines Act, the PA PUC was given additional authority and financial resources to enforce federal pipeline safety laws. Additionally, the PA PUC maintains a list of registered pipeline operators and their facilities within the Commonwealth.

To learn more about the PA PUC's jurisdiction and responsibilities, visit the PA PUC [website](#).

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP)

The PA DEP is responsible for administering a host of permitting and plan approval requirements related to the siting and construction of natural gas and related facilities. These include permits to guard against erosion, sedimentation and increased storm water runoff; to ensure wetlands and waterways are protected; and to protect rare, threatened and endangered species and their habitat. PA DEP is responsible for ensuring that applicants have coordinated with public resource agencies, where required.

PA DEP, in conjunction with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), also reviews air quality plans for emissions associated with natural gas compressor and processing facilities to ensure that air quality standards are maintained and protective of public health. PA DEP requires natural gas producers and facility operators to report emissions on an annual basis.

Additional information is available on the PA DEP Bureau of Air Quality [website](#).



Local Government

Municipal Governments

Municipal governments (townships, boroughs and cities) that choose to enact zoning and related ordinances can determine in which zoning districts compressor stations, processing plants and well pads may be located. Municipalities can also establish standards related to issues such as noise, dust and light. Municipalities are precluded from adopting standards which seek to regulate the same features of oil and gas operations that are regulated by PA DEP.

Counties may also choose to adopt zoning and related ordinances that are applicable to municipalities within the county which have not adopted their own zoning and related ordinances.

County Conservation Districts

Under state law, PA DEP is authorized to delegate certain permitting and enforcement responsibilities for erosion, sedimentation and storm-water management programs to county conservation districts. This generally includes environmental permits for transmission pipelines, transmission system compressor locations, gas purification and scrubber facilities.

How is the public engaged in the pipeline development process?

Pipeline projects require various state or federal environmental permits to safeguard the land, air and water resources of the Commonwealth. The specific permits required are governed by the type of pipeline project that is proposed.

Under Act 14 of 1984, permit applicants are required to provide municipal notification prior to permit application. In order to ensure that local stakeholders are not only fully informed about proposed pipeline development but are also able to weigh in on the corresponding permits, the permit documents from PA DEP contain explicit instructions regarding the notification process and the content of the notification.

PA DEP has an extensive public participation process for individual permits, such as those located in a special protection watershed, including a public comment period. This process is outlined in the [Policy on Public Participation in the Permit Review Process](#). This policy addresses issues including when conducting a public hearing on a particular individual permit is in order, and more. For projects under federal jurisdiction, [FERC](#) provides a litany of information and resources for residents interested in getting involved.

What is PA One Call?

Established under the authority of the Pennsylvania Underground Utility Line Protection Law, PA One Call is intended to provide a one-stop-shop for persons undertaking certain construction or excavation work to notify underground pipeline owners or operators, and other utility infrastructure, regarding their intention to perform work in a specific location. This enables the owner or operator to clearly mark the location of their underground pipeline or utility infrastructure so that it can be avoided during construction or excavation activities. For more information, visit www.pa1call.org or call 8-1-1 and always remember to “*Call Before You Dig.*”

Are there pipelines near me?

To see if there are any natural gas or hazardous liquids transmission lines near you, visit the PHMSA [National Pipeline Mapping System](#). Please note that this system contains information on transmission lines only, and does not contain a map of gathering lines or distribution lines. In addition, under federal regulations pipeline operators must have a [public education program](#) in place for communicating with property owners, public officials and excavators on a regular basis.



To learn more about pipeline and midstream facilities and getting gas to market, reference the Pipeline and Midstream Facilities Fact Sheet.