



PIPELINE PRESSURE TESTING

Pipeline pressure testing is a means of assessing a pipeline's integrity. It involves isolating a segment of pipeline and filling the pipeline with water, inert gas, air, or in some cases, natural gas, under pressure that is higher than the pipeline's normal operating pressure. The higher pressure level is then maintained over several hours to see if the pipeline has or develops any leaks. If there are no leaks, the pipeline can resume normal, safe operation. If the pipeline has or develops any leaks during the test, it is either repaired or replaced. The entire pressure testing process can last from two to six weeks, or longer.

Following the 2010 natural gas pipeline rupture in San Bruno, a city just south of San Francisco, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) launched a pipeline safety rulemaking proceeding. The intent of the proceeding is to adopt new safety and reliability regulations for natural gas pipelines, based upon lessons learned.

As part of the proceeding, the CPUC ordered the state's four natural gas transmission pipeline operators – Pacific Gas & Electric, Southwest Gas and San Diego Gas & Electric, as well as Southern California Gas Company -- to develop plans to replace or pressure test all natural gas transmission pipelines that have not been tested to modern standards. Regulations specifying pressure testing were implemented after many of the transmission pipelines were installed.

In response, SoCalGas has submitted to the CPUC a Pipeline Safety Enhancement Plan in which we propose to conduct, over the next several years, pressure testing on approximately 360 miles of our 3,640-mile transmission pipeline system. This will further enhance SoCalGas' pipeline system safety.

Testing will take place in various areas of our service territory. Prior to performing a pressure test, SoCalGas plans to complete an internal pipeline inspection, often called an inline inspection, on the pipelines that are configured to allow this type of inspection. SoCalGas will work with environmental agencies and local government officials to secure permits to perform the necessary work. SoCalGas also will make every effort to provide an alternate natural gas supply for customers while the pipeline in their community is taken out of service for testing and try to otherwise mitigate impacts in the community.

Once the pipeline being tested is temporarily removed from service, SoCalGas will safely vent the methane in the pipeline and remove any debris from the pipeline. Next, SoCalGas will seal both ends of the pipeline and fill it, under pressure, with water, inert gas, air or natural gas. Pressure will be maintained within the pipeline for approximately eight hours. After the test is completed, SoCalGas will either remove the water, or vent the air or inert gas from the pipeline. Depending on test results, SoCalGas may need to repair or replace some pipelines. If repairs are needed, SoCalGas will make them and then perform a second pressure test to confirm success of the repairs.