

GAS

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Residents notified

Humphreys said residents, township officials and the Dallas School District were notified of the ongoing work at the site just before it was completed in early January. Some residents expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of notice that was received, as Humphreys hand-delivered letters to nearby residents a day before work was set to be completed.

"What I'm worried about is that both gas companies will be in Dallas Township, and it's very easy to say sorry, but if my house blows up, I don't want to hear sorry," said Wayne Dottor, a Fairground Road resident. "They're not good at keeping their word."

Humphreys said Williams has increased its "courtesy communication" due to residents' ongoing concerns, and has met with county emergency management officials to determine a line of communication as well as emergency response plans.

County involvement

Stephen Bekanich, Luzerne County emergency management director, has dealt with the Williams company for a number of years because the Williams-owned Transco interstate pipeline, located in municipalities throughout the county, was built in the late 1950s.

The Springville line sends natural gas from wells in Susquehanna County to the part of the Transco line that runs through Dallas Township, which then sends the gas to market.

"I have all the confidence all the world in Williams - they're not a fly-by-night company, and

they've been in the area for a long time," said Bekanich. "There are Williams pipelines in the county. We've dealt with them on previous emergencies, and they've been very professional."

Bekanich also said the county emergency management officials recently met with Dallas Township emergency management officials to discuss a line of communication that would be appropriate in terms of the pipelines.

"If there is any type of routine work being done, such as maintenance, I wouldn't be notified about it, nor would I want to be," said Bekanich. "I would be getting those types of calls hundreds of times a day, and I don't have the time or the personnel to be fielding those types of calls."

Bekanich said the only time Williams would contact the county emergency management agency and the county 911 center would be if there is out-of-the-ordinary work being done, or if gas was to be released.

He said Dallas Township officials would need to take it upon themselves to ask for routine notifications from Williams.

Humphreys said Williams follows the mandated procedures as spelled out by the Pennsylvania Hazardous Material Emergency Planning and Response Act of 1990.

The law

The law outlines the requirements companies must follow to coordinate emergency preparedness with local first responders.

According to the law, companies must notify state and local emergency management if there is an accident or incident that results in the release of a hazardous material, which includes a laundry list of details about the incident.

The county officials must

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Luzerne County emergency management director

then notify the fire chief in the local municipality in which the accident or incident took place and with all the aforementioned details.

An emergency preparedness council, which was formed as part of the act, regularly convenes to discuss the effectiveness of the law's notification process, and makes changes accordingly.

Bekanich said this law applies to any company that deals with hazardous substances. He said any time a company transports a chemical or substance in larger than usual amounts, that company must report to the county emergency management agency the details of the materials and pay a fee in support of a hazardous materials emergency response plan.

"It depends on what business it is," said Bekanich. "In some cases, (companies) do notify us and in some cases they don't."

Humphreys also said in certain situations at the site, such as out-of-the-ordinary repairs and tests, Williams will continue to provide the township and residents with information to quell concerns.

"Awareness of the (natural gas) industry has been heightened, and this is an opportunity to provide information to people, and we will continue to want to do that," said Humphreys.

Chief also involved

Chief Gathering LLC is an

other company expected to build a pipeline that ends in Dallas Township, and officials have already begun working on a notification plan of their own for nearby residents.

Kristi Gittens, Chief's vice president of marketing, said the company plans to set up an e-mail notification system which any resident could utilize.

"The information about what we're doing won't be day-to-day because it doesn't change that rapidly, but it will be every couple days or every week as the project progresses," said Gittens.

She said Chief doesn't have the manpower to answer residents' individual questions at any time, but the e-mail notifications will provide the same information to a multitude of interested parties so staffers don't have to repeatedly answer the same questions.

Gittens said the company meets with landowners regularly and sends out letters to let them know what's happening, but said it's also important for anyone who might be affected to know what's going on and to squash potential concerns.

The e-mail notification system has yet to be developed as

the company has not yet broken ground for its 30-mile Wyoming County Pipeline Project. Company officials said the pipeline is set to be completed by August.

The Transco line has a completely different series of requirements to follow, as the line runs through multiple states. The Transco line to which both Chief and Williams will connect runs from New York to Texas.

Other companies

Other companies are required to notify customers, residents and township officials in the event of emergency work.

United Water, located in Dallas Township, provides customers with rapid-dial phone calls whenever an emergency or out of the ordinary work ensues.

Bob Manbeck, a United Water spokesperson, said the company has utilized this method since 2006 and found it to be the most effective form of communication, as long as customers update phone number changes.

He also said the company posts information to its website regularly to keep customers and interested parties informed.

In the past, residents had concerns about noise at Pulverman Enterprises, located on Lower Demunds Road, but president Randy Mark said the company has resolved those issues.

He said the operation of the manufacturing plant has not changed. In the event of an expansion or any type of work that may affect neighbors of the facility, Mark said he would send notifications to residents and the township.

He said the company is not required by law to notify residents of its work.

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