

The Kansas Corporation Commission receives pipeline safety grant

The Kansas Corporation Commission (KCC) has been awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) to assist in its underground pipeline damage prevention efforts.

The grant will be used to fund one full-time employee dedicated to damage prevention inspections and enforcement for the Wichita metropolitan area as well as augment enforcement in the Kansas City metropolitan area.

Excavation damage is the most common cause of damage to underground pipelines. The Wichita and Kansas City metropolitan areas account for 60% of the excavation activity in Kansas. Statewide, there were 1187 reports of gas lines damaged as a result of excavation activity in 2016. Of those, 50% occurred in the two metro areas.

"This grant opportunity has allowed the KCC to have a presence in the field at the site of the damage before repairs are complete," said KCC Chief Engineer Leo Haynos. "The ability to interview the parties involved, to look at the locate marks, and to understand the type of excavating equipment involved, provides the inspector with the information needed to make a credible determination of the cause."

In addition to compliance actions for violations, including the recommendation of civil penalties, the KCC's enforcement strategy is coupled with a strong educational component that fosters communication among all parties. Using this approach, damages to underground natural gas pipelines with respect to excavation activity in the area have stabilized at 2 damages per every 1000 excavations.

Kansas was one among 24 states and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to receive a PHMSA grant.