

The Kansas Corporation Commission receives pipeline safety grant

The Kansas Corporation Commission (KCC) has been awarded a \$99,635 grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) to assist with underground pipeline damage prevention efforts.

Excavation damage is the most common cause of damage to underground pipelines. In Kansas last year, there were 1184 reports of gas lines damaged due to excavation activity. Of those, 305 damages or 26% occurred in the Wichita and Kansas City metropolitan areas.

The grant will 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.

"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 two damages per every 1000 excavations.

Kansas was one of 18 states to receive a PHMSA damage prevention grant.