

Pipeline Safety

If You Live or Work Near a Pipeline

How can you tell where a pipeline is located?

Since pipelines are buried underground, line markers like the ones shown here are used to indicate their approximate location along the route. The markers can be found where a pipeline intersects a street, highway, or railroad.

The markers display the material transported in the line, the name of the pipeline operator, and a telephone number where the operator can be reached in the event of an emergency.



Painted Metal
or Plastic Post

Right-of-way
Markers

Aerial Marker

Casing Vent
Pipe

Do Not Remove or Deface

Pipeline marker signs such as those pictured above are important to public safety. They are so important, in fact, that Congress in 1988 passed a law making it a federal crime to willfully deface, damage, remove, or destroy any pipeline sign or right-of-way marker that is required by federal law.

Are markers always placed on top of the pipeline?

Markers indicate the general location of a pipeline. They cannot be relied upon to indicate the exact position of the pipeline they mark. Also, the pipeline may not follow a straight course between markers. And, while markers are helpful in locating pipelines, they are limited in the information they provide. They provide no information, for example, on the depth or number of pipelines in the vicinity.

How can you recognize a pipeline leak?

Sight, sound, and smell are helpful in detecting pipeline leaks.

Look for:

- Crude oil or liquid petroleum products on the ground
- A dense white cloud or fog

- A spot of dead vegetation in an otherwise green location may indicate a slow leak
- Flames (if the leak has ignited)

Listen for:

- A roaring or hissing sound

Smell for:

- A pungent odor, sometimes like “rotten eggs”
- A gasoline-type odor

What should you do if you suspect a leak?

Your first concern should be for your personal safety and that of those around you if you suspect a leak.

- Leave the area immediately
- Avoid driving into vapor clouds
- Avoid direct contact with escaping gases or liquids
- Avoid creating sparks or other sources of heat which could cause the escaping liquids or vapor to ignite and burn. If you find yourself in an area where you suspect hydrocarbon vapors are present, do not light a match, start an engine, or even switch on an electric light.
- Call 9-1-1
- Notify the pipeline operator

Pipeline contents can vary greatly

- Pipelines carry both gaseous and liquid materials
- Many liquids form gaseous vapor clouds when released
- Many pipelines contain colorless and odorless products
- Some pipeline gases are lighter than air and will rise
- Other heavier-than-air gases and liquids will stay near the ground and collect in low spots
- All petroleum gases and liquids are flammable
- Any pipeline leak can be potentially dangerous

Louisiana One Call

Excavators and homeowners should dial 811 or 1-800-272-3020 to reach LA One Call before starting any digging projects on or near any pipelines. These projects include fences, flagpoles, landscaping, storage buildings, foundations, swimming pools, ground clearing, deep plowing, laying underground pipe or wiring, or any other “digging” projects.

