



GAS UTILITY SAFETY AND ATMOS ENERGY

Quick Facts

Natural gas line explosions have killed nine people in north and central Texas since 2006, destroyed more than two dozen homes and injured at least 22. The latest major accident, a Feb. 23 explosion in North Dallas, killed a 12-year-old girl. These tragedies have renewed the public's interest in gas safety issues -- especially as they pertain to the Mid-Tex division of Atmos Energy, the North Texas gas utility.

This quick-fact sheet summarizes findings from The Dallas Morning News and the Associated Press, as well as data collected from Atmos Energy and the American Gas Association.



HOW IS NATURAL GAS DISTRIBUTED?

Utilities deliver natural gas to customers through high-pressure pipelines. The natural gas pipeline system in the United States delivers about a quarter of the nation's energy and covers 2.5 million miles. Atmos Energy, the natural gas utility in north and central Texas, operates about 32,000 miles of pipes -- and some of them are the nation's oldest. This leaves them vulnerable to cracks and corrosion.

WHAT AGENCY OVERSEES GAS UTILITIES?

At the federal level, pipeline safety oversight falls to the Pipeline and Hazardous Material Safety Administration. At the state level, the Texas Railroad Commission has responsibility for ensuring the safety of intrastate pipelines.

WHAT IS THE ATMOS SAFETY RECORD?

Over the past decade, Atmos has received more than 2,000 citations alleging violations of pipeline safety rules. By contrast, Houston's CenterPoint Energy has received 400. The Dallas Morning News also reports that the rate of significant pipeline accidents for Atmos has gotten worse — not better — over the last decade.

HOW MANY LEAKS HAS ATMOS DETECTED?

Atmos Mid-Tex has discovered more than 3,000 leaks in its Dallas-area gas-line system during the first half of 2018. Nearly half the leaks are hazardous, according to a Dallas Morning News report.

WHAT SORT OF PIPE IS FAILING?

Failures of cast-iron pipes led to recent Dallas utility explosions. Natural gas companies have known about the dangers of cast-iron pipes since the 1970s and federal regulators since the 1980s have recommended their removal. Twenty states have banned such pipe, but not Texas.

HOW MUCH CAST-IRON PIPE REMAINS?

Atmos has removed all cast-iron pipe in other states in which it operates, but has 500 miles of the pipe remaining in Texas. The utility has told regulators it needs at least three more years to remove all cast-iron pipe in Mid-Tex system. Houston's CenterPoint removed all its cast-iron pipe more than two decades ago.

HOW LONG BEFORE IT'S ALL REMOVED?

Atmos has announced that its goal is to eliminate all cast iron from the Mid-Tex distribution system by 2021.

SOURCES

The Dallas Morning News
The Associated Press
Atmos Energy
The American Gas Association