



## API/AOPL Emergency Response Forums

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# Promote Discussion Among Pipeline Operators, Agencies and First Responders on Pipeline Emergency Preparedness and Response

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With a collective goal of shared learnings to protect lives, the environment and property in the wake of a hazardous liquid pipeline emergency, the American Petroleum Institute (API) and Association of Oil Pipe Lines (AOPL) are hosting annual Emergency Response Forums.

This forum initiative launched last summer when more than 160 emergency responders and representatives of pipeline companies gathered for the inaugural Emergency Response Forum June 18 and June 19, 2014 in Houston, Texas. A second forum in this series is planned for June 23-24, 2015 in Fort Worth, Texas.

The Emergency Response Forums are one of the major communication initiatives of the API/AOPL Emergency Response Team (Team). The API/AOPL Pipeline Leadership created the Team in 2012 to develop a strategy to address emergency response to pipeline emergencies in an ongoing and systematic manner that aligns the efforts of the API/AOPL “Environmental and Safety Initiative” with those of pertinent committees and work groups.

The two-day Forum last summer marked a major step in encouraging collaboration and discussion among the pipeline industry, regulatory agencies and emergency responders on how they can work together to improve the response to pipeline incidents. Through an agenda brimming with interactive presentations, case studies and breakout sessions, three key themes emerged throughout the two days: the need to build trust, enhance communication and cultivate relationships.

“We are committed to working toward the goal of aligning industry, government and emergency response organizations’ expectations, practices and competencies to promote timely and effective response to significant incidents,” said Andrew J. Black, President and CEO, AOPL. “This Forum is a significant step toward achieving that.”



Jeff Titus, Emergency Response Program Specialist with Colonial Pipeline, delivered the first presentation: “Key Things Emergency Responders Need to Know About Pipeline Resources.”

Titus shared how it is fortunate that significant liquid pipeline spills occur with low frequency; but, unfortunately, they can carry potentially high consequence when they do occur. “In relatively quick fashion, we try to understand the scope of the incident, the resources necessary to address it and how we need to start prioritizing efforts,” Titus said. “We bring all resources to bear, and essentially, would rather ‘over respond.’”

Titus stressed that safety is paramount – a common theme among all speakers at the event. He also implored operators to be mindful about leveraging the knowledge and expertise of first responders in a unified command.

“We are most vulnerable in the first four hours to six hours,” Titus said, “and there are many things first responders can do, especially during this critical time.” He elaborated that first responders could assist with evacuations, traffic control, air monitoring and constructing containment dams and blocking culverts.

In what could be viewed as a reciprocal presentation, “Key Things Pipeline Operators Need to Know About First Responders,” David Wade, Industrial Liaison for Harris County (Texas) Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management, joined Bob Royall, Assistant Chief, Harris County Fire Marshal’s Office.

Royall began the presentation by extending appreciation to the industry, particularly for embracing the National Incident Management System (NIMS). He then elaborated that with more than 4 million people residing in Harris County, more than 8,800 miles of pipeline and 34 cities, Harris County provides the ideal backdrop to learn about pipeline response. “If you look at a map, it looks like someone painted Harris County with red and blue,” Royall said. “There is no better place in the world to learn about pipeline response than Harris County.”

While acknowledging operator requirements in relation to the regulatory notification process, Royall also emphasized the need for operators to include local notifications as a priority. “All responses start locally and end locally,” he said. “We are beholden to our citizens and local officials.”



Additionally, Wade and Royall underscored the need for operators to fold into the Unified Command that first responders establish and not set up separate organizations. “I can’t say enough about close coordination and communication,” Royall said. “If we are communicating well together, it is going to be a seamless response.”

Wade concluded by stressing the value of joint industry and first responder exercises. “There is a major benefit of learning beforehand your emergency response community,” Wade said. “Know your friends before you need them at 2 o’clock in the morning on a holiday weekend.”

In line with the theme of developing ongoing relationships and maximizing resources, Dona Harrington-Burns, Public Awareness Manager with Colonial Pipeline, described the Georgia Pipeline Emergency Response Initiative (GPERI) and how that effort has advanced preparedness for responding to pipeline emergencies. Formed in 2013, GPERI is a public-private partnership composed of Georgia pipeline operators, local distribution companies and first responders.

Working with the Georgia Public Safety Training Center, GPERI designs and delivers a tiered-training and certification program to first responders. During the last three years, more than 620 Georgia fire department representatives have participated in the program, which includes additional re-certification training modules at specified intervals.

The first day’s presentations concluded with representatives of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) sharing “Expectations From Federal On-Scene Coordinators.”

Chris Ruhl, On-Scene Coordinator with EPA, Region 6, and Heather Parker, Regional Response Team (RRT) Coordinator with USCG, District 13, explained the jurisdictional parameters of each agency. They emphasized that the Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC) is looking for a synchronized effort that reflects the operator is communicating, cooperating and coordinating with local responders.



“The FOSC and state OSC always expect a robust, well-staffed, aggressive response,” Parker said. “We want to ensure the responsible party is engaged for the duration of the incident and quickly mobilizing resources.”

Parker and Ruhl each said that regulatory agencies want to know that operators are being proactive. Ruhl stressed the need to develop contingency plans that include resources, capabilities and vulnerabilities, as well as staff expertise. In fact, he emphasized the importance of operators getting involved with area committees and regional response teams as they develop the contingency plans that will be used to guide response efforts.

Ruhl also underscored the importance of being “straightforward from the start” in the public response to the incident. He cited as one example the need to quickly obtain analytical data, such as air monitoring results.

The first case study of the Forum exemplified how proactive and consistent communication can contribute to a positive response outcome. Gus Borkland, VP - Health, Environment, Safety & Security at Sunoco Logistics Partners, joined Mike Wetherbee, Chief of the Wellington Fire Department (Lorain County, Ohio) in recapping a joint response scenario.

Located approximately 40 miles southwest of Cleveland, Wellington has a population of slightly less than 5,000. Its 32-member fire department is responsible for one village and five townships across 125 square miles.

In January 2012, every emergency resource of Wellington was called into action when Sunoco Logistics experienced a pipeline release. Though the flow was away from the center of town, sustained high winds and 22° temperatures complicated the situation.

Chief Wetherbee mobilized his department, as well as other resources from local jurisdictions. The response included 11 mutual aid fire departments from three counties, as well as state and USEPA, the USCG and the Pipeline Hazardous Materials and Safety Administration (PHMSA). Simultaneously, Sunoco



expeditiously assembled a team of hundreds of company and contractor personnel to provide on-site support.

The decision to evacuate was made immediately, and within three days, the team determined that a one-week displacement for affected residents was appropriate due to air quality concerns. Unified Command was established within the Incident Command Center, and Sunoco Logistics provided a public information officer immediately, according to Chief Wetherbee.

That enabled regular public briefings, with a continual flow of information to responders and the public through news releases to print and broadcast media. Together, response officials also hosted public informational meetings and attended those hosted by affected townships. “We viewed the briefing sessions and meetings as an opportunity to listen, as well as be heard,” Borkland said.

Chief Wetherbee, who said he had no experience with pipeline incidents prior to this event, treated the situation, as would many firefighters, as a HazMat response. Nevertheless, Borkland notes, “the assistance we got from Chief Wetherbee and the Wellington Fire Department was phenomenal and started us on the right path.” Borkland readily acknowledges Chief Wetherbee and the other first responders for their adeptness in installing containment dams to retard the flow of gasoline into a nearby creek, preventing a challenging situation from escalating.

Chief Wetherbee applauded not only Sunoco’s responsiveness and willingness to work with the first responders, but its empathy toward the residents. “I can’t say enough about Sunoco Logistics and Sunoco Pipeline,” he shared. “There was an unwavering commitment from Sunoco to residents and the community.”

For Borkland, the reason is simple: “Authentic communication is a priority, especially when remembering the community did not ask for this.”

The next case study highlighted a March 2013 ExxonMobil Pipeline Company crude oil release in Mayflower, Arkansas. Although Mayflower has a population of less than 2,000, the city is located in Faulkner County, Arkansas, one of the fastest growing counties in the U.S.



“ExxonMobil did a really good job,” said Faulkner County Judge Allen Dodson, whose jurisdictional responsibilities include first responders and emergency personnel. “The reason I am here is because I invite you to replicate it. You can do one of two things: Learn from it and replicate it or do nothing.”

Dodson stressed engagement to build trust and provide a unified message. “It’s a benefit to your bottom line to get your local officials involved,” he said. “Your business doesn’t stop when your short-term goal of cleanup stops. You want to be in this community forever, so you want to cultivate the relationship.”

Nic Brescia, EPA, Region 6, and Ryan Benefield, State Director, Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), joined Dodson in stressing the importance of collaboration, and in particular, relying on the expertise of local officials. Brescia also noted the need for strong coordination among the multiple agencies involved, particularly as it pertains to sampling and sharing results with residents who have been temporarily evacuated. Brescia stressed the need for a prompt, accurate, understandable report, the results of which will assist the Unified Command to determine whether people may return to their homes.

Karen Tyrone, Vice President with ExxonMobil Pipeline, concluded the presentation by extending appreciation to the first responders and sharing how public awareness played a critical role in early notification. ExxonMobil learned quickly of the incident, in part, because of a report from a local resident who recalled previous public awareness efforts conducted by the company.

Throughout the two days of the Forum, attendees also participated in breakout sessions. The sessions covered a wide range of topics, including how industry assesses the capabilities of first responders and the importance of “speaking the language” of first responders, not expecting them to speak the language of the industry. Feedback from the breakout sessions also touched upon how pipeline operators can engage first responders early in terms of potential evacuations and understanding the political landscape of the impacted area. Coordination, communication and resources were consistent themes throughout each of the sessions.



“We learned a lot from one another over the two days,” said Tom Cervino, Director - Environmental, for Colonial Pipeline, and the team member who chaired the event. “The Forum reinforced that success ultimately depends on people and the relationships we build.”

Cervino’s words were echoed on the second day with a panel discussion: “Lessons Learned 1: Effectively Managing the First Six to Eight Hours before the Experts Arrive and Building Credibility.” Gweneyette Broussard, Senior Legislative & Regulatory Affairs Representative for Shell Pipeline, moderated the discussion. Ryan Andersen, Emergency Response Program Manager with Plains All American Pipeline; Tom Budde, Emergency Preparedness & Response Advisor, ExxonMobil Pipeline; Art Haskins, Emergency Response Coordinator with Enbridge; and Larry Lamaison, Operations Support Manager with Shell Pipeline, served as panelists.

“We have a tremendous base of resources in this room - hundreds of years of collective experience,” Broussard said. “We have the opportunity to really and truly share with one another how we can improve, how we can do better. It is an opportunity to be honest and open and really learn from one another.”

The panelists offered candid insights on a range of topics raised throughout the two days in three general areas: activation, site stabilization and communication. They provided their thoughts on local vs. required notifications, communicating with responders and building and maintaining credibility.

Collectively, they stressed the need to know and rely on local resources; notifying officials as appropriate; clear communication with stakeholders; and the need for leadership and empathy for the communities that might be affected by the incident.

Rod Dillon, Manager of Emergency Response Programs for Kinder Morgan, served as moderator for “Lessons Learned 2: Effective Interaction Between Your Spill Management Team and Crisis Management Team.” Jeff Titus of Colonial Pipeline returned to the stage to join panelists Mike Carter, Senior Emergency Response Coordinator with Sunoco Logistics, and Stephen Lloyd, Senior Manager, Emergency Response & Security Management with Enbridge Pipelines.



They discussed the roles of an operator’s Spill Management Team (SMT) and Crisis Management Team (CMT). In general, the SMT is responsible for determining how to stop the release, safety concerns, involvement of sensitive areas, security, containment, loss measurement, and recovery. The public information officer, safety lead, agency liaison, planning section chief, logistics chief, finance chief, and operations lead comprise the SMT, which needs to have a “10,000-foot view of the incident.”

On the other hand, the panelists said the CMT needs to have a “30,000-foot view of the incident.” The CMT is responsible for key messaging and media relations, reputation management, investor relations, government relations, and litigation. The chief executive officer, chief financial officer, senior media liaison, attorney, administrative support staff, and business operations leader comprise the CMT, which also maintains spending authority during a response. Panelists agreed that on this leadership-laden team, one of the most significant roles belongs to the facilitator. The facilitator serves as the liaison between the SMT and CMT, enabling the teams to communicate with one another while maintaining focus on the primary tasks.

The API/AOPL Emergency Response Team are currently working on sustaining the momentum gained from the Forum, according to Cervino. The Team reviewed the recommendations, developed next steps and will continue to seek ways to share that information with API/AOPL members and other Forum attendees.

In addition to bringing first responders, regulatory agencies and industry together, the Forum provided an ideal vehicle to announce another Team initiative: the Pipeline Emergency Training Portal. Offered free of charge to first responders, the online training comprises awareness, operation and technician level courses using the National Association of State Fire Marshals’ “Pipeline Emergencies” Program. It will enable first responders to learn the techniques and skills to best address a hazardous liquid or natural gas pipeline incident. The portal is available at [nasfm-training.org/pipeline](http://nasfm-training.org/pipeline).

More information on the 2015 Forum will be available in late January at <http://www.api.org/events-and-training/calendar-of-events>.