

**BEFORE
THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO**

In the Matter of the Commission's)	
Review of its Rules in Chapter 4901:1-16)	Case No. 13-2237-GA-ORD
of the Ohio Administrative Code,)	
Regarding Gas Pipeline Safety.)	

**INITIAL COMMENTS OF
THE OHIO GAS ASSOCIATION**

Representing the interests of over 30 local distribution companies and cooperatives, the Ohio Gas Association (the "OGA" or "Association") submits these comments for the Commission's consideration to incorporate into Chapter 4901:1-16, the pipeline safety rules.

From a policy perspective, the OGA supports Staff's commitment to increasing pipeline safety within Ohio. OGA shares Staff's desire to critically review gas pipeline safety regulations in order to identify necessary changes to improve pipeline safety in a thoughtful and efficient manner. Therefore, the OGA supports Staff's changes of the definition of leak detection equipment in 4901:1-16-01(M), the effective date in 4901:1-16-02(D), the physical inspection of reclassified grade one leaks in 4901:1-16-04(I), the dollar threshold increase for construction reports in 4901:1-16-06(A), and the inclusion of new construction in operator qualification requirements in 4901:1-16-06(D).

Staff proposes a new rule, Ohio Adm. Code 4901:1-16-05(G), intended to address the potential hazards associated with abandoned or blighted properties that remain connected to a gas distribution system. To address this concern, Staff proposes two rules: the first, a mandatory assessment and physical abandonment within three months of unsafe inactive service lines, and the second, a mandatory abandonment within six months of service lines that have been inactive for at least two years and which the utility determines not to have a future use.

The new rule in Ohio Adm. Code 4901:1-16-05(G)(1) requires each operator to conduct an annual assessment of service lines inactive for at least one year. Though the

rules are silent as to the nature or extent of the assessment, the OGA believes such an assessment is already being done during an LDC's leak inspection and corrosion monitoring surveys, conducted on an operator's pipeline system. Utilities are including inactive service lines in their leak and corrosion surveys required by federal and state law. To require a more frequent physical examination of service lines would prioritize inactive service lines over those that are active. The OGA asks that the Commission remove the "annual" requirement from the assessment, to ensure that pipeline operators may continue to assess all service line pursuant to Commission and PHMSA rules and regulations.

Proposed rule Ohio Adm. Code 4901:1-16-05(G)(2) also adds another new requirement for operators: the abandonment within six months of service lines inactive for at least two years. Though OGA's individual members have different proposals as to how the Commission should address this rule, the Association does agree that safety of vacant and abandoned properties is an issue each utility has been working to address in its service territory. Moreover, each utility's territory provides unique challenges to this situation, which requires an individualized approach to addressing Staff's concern. Therefore, the OGA recommends that the Commission hold a workshop to further clarify its intent with this rule and permit local distribution companies and other stakeholders to participate in a collaborative process to further refine a regulations regarding abandonment of inactive service lines.

The OGA appreciates the Staff's efforts to make Ohioians safer and the Commission's consideration of its comments to these rules. Therefore, the OGA asks that the Commission adopt the Pipeline Safety Rules with the changes proposed herein.

Dated: April 4, 2014

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Mark A. Whitt

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Summary: Comments Initial Comments electronically filed by Mr. Gregory L. Williams on behalf of The Ohio Gas Association