

Is Meaningful Public Awareness on the Horizon? Can you divorce Public Awareness from Public Engagement?

Pipeline Safety Trust Conference
October 21, 2016



Shift?: Focus on Stakeholder Responsibilities

- The current approach to PA is producing diminishing returns.
- Communities have a responsibility to act on public awareness information, but they're not required to.
- You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink... Or can you? It depends on the horse.
- Can we develop and implement a regulation that requires some Public Awareness stakeholders to act on the PA information they receive?
 - Example: Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act requires communities to act when in receipt of information about chemical facilities.
 - Example: Improved damage prevention law enforcement



Who Do You Trust?

- Trust is fundamental to engagement.
- Trust is relative. Stakeholder audiences often trust their own, not “others”.
 - Do stakeholders trust the federal government? Do stakeholders trust pipeline operators?
 - Emergency responders trust emergency responders; excavators trust excavators; neighbors trust neighbors.
- Efforts like the Pipeline Emergency Responder Initiatives (PERI) can help to overcome trust issues.
- Another example: The Common Ground Alliance is a critical organization for advancing excavation safety advocacy.



Consolidated Messages vs. Operator-Specific Messages

- Information overload is a real problem for some stakeholder audiences.
 - Example: Emergency responders often get the same information from multiple operators.
- There are common messages that apply to all operators. Those can be consolidated and delivered in a standard way.
- Consolidation will free pipeline operators and stakeholder audiences to focus on system-specific messages that are critically important to communities.
- Operators must feel confident that regulators will accept this approach. Failure to address this will stifle creativity and limit operators' options to improve Public Awareness.



Engagement... On What??

- PHMSA's Public Awareness regulations have a narrow focus – pipeline safety for existing pipelines.
- Public Awareness regulations do not address siting, climate change, keep-it-in-the-ground, “not in my backyard”, and a host of other pipeline-related public concerns.
- What is the proper role of regulation with regard to encouraging public engagement?



Who Engages, and Why?

- Does Public Awareness information encourage engagement? Yes, sometimes, but...
- The desire to engage is often driven by things that have nothing to do with Public Awareness information:
 - Incident/tragedy
 - Connection to a place
 - Health concerns
 - Proposed regulation that impacts landowners or businesses
- How can we better engage in these instances?
- Can Public Awareness regulations and programs adequately address these concerns?



What's Next for PHMSA?

- Using the Public Awareness SWOT report and other sources of input, we are evaluating elements of Public Awareness that are appropriate for regulatory changes.
- We are evaluating activities like PERI and other approaches that could constitute compliance for operators while better serving the needs of stakeholder audiences.
- We are engaging with the American Petroleum Institute on the 3rd edition of RP 1162.
 - We are driving transparency in this process.
 - We are committed to addressing stakeholder concerns – through regulation – that are not addressed in RP 1162.



Thank You

Sam Hall

(804) 239-9283

Sam.Hall@dot.gov

