PSE &G Aging Gas Infrastructure Replacement Program Underway

By: Joseph A. Forline, Vice President, PSE&G Gas Operations

Utility Work Ahead

Detours are an inevitable byproduct of a critical project that's ramping up across PSE&G's service area. Under a $905 million program, New Jersey's largest utility is speeding up the replacement of its aging gas infrastructure, which means more crews are in more towns digging in streets and replacing pipes.

No doubt, the work is disruptive. But it has to be done -- and now is the time to do it.

Here's why:

Old pipes – PSE&G has 3,900 miles of cast iron pipes, and another 1,000 miles of unprotected steel – the largest inventory of any utility in the U.S. The utility has so much old piping because it has been serving customers for 113 years. Some of PSE&G's pipes are more than a century old.

Methane leaks – Decades of freezing and thawing, and moist soil, cause cast iron to become brittle, and some pipes crack. When they crack, they release methane gas, which has 84 times the warming power of carbon dioxide over a 20 year time frame. Plastic pipes are better for the environment because they are much less likely to release methane gas.

Low gas prices – Why now? Natural gas prices are at historic lows. Gas supply reductions have lowered PSE&G customer bills 51 percent since 2009. By doing this now, customers won't feel a big pinch in their pocketbooks.

Jobs – These pipe replacements are creating "work" for people in New Jersey – about 500 direct, sustained jobs during the three-year program. In 2016 alone, PSE&G hired 195 new, full-time employees for good-paying jobs with benefits. This benefits the economy in other ways as well – creating jobs for contractors and in manufacturing. In fact, the majority of the plastic pipes we use are manufactured right here in New Jersey.

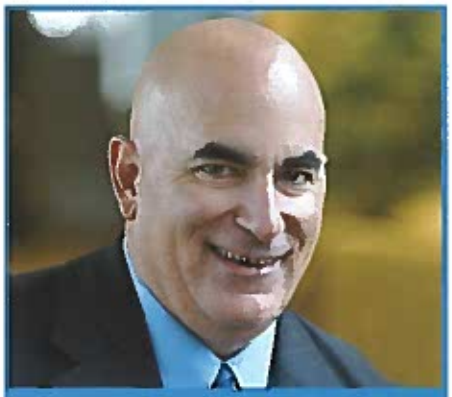
Here's how the process works:

Before construction begins, PSE&G reaches out to municipal officials and town engineers to plan and map out the project in their town. Residents are notified when work begins in their area by phone, mail, email, door hangers and Facebook posts.

First, the utility tests soil and digs test holes to verify the location of existing gas mains. When this preliminary work is complete, PSE&G crews protect the work area with traffic cones, utility work signs, and barriers, and begin installing new gas mains and upgrading associated service lines that carry the gas to homes and businesses.

PSE&G crews dig trenches, primarily in road surfaces, and lay new pipes block by block, to limit the impacted areas on any given day. There are short-term road closures and detours during construction. Local police direct vehicle and pedestrian traffic. Homeowners always have access to their driveways. At the end of each workday, the trenches are filled in, and plates secured, on any open areas so people can safely drive and walk.

After the new gas mains are installed, PSE&G needs to access customers' homes to connect their service lines and meter. The utility contacts homeowners to arrange a date and time to do the connections. During the connection work, customers are without gas service for approximately four hours. If a gas meter is inside, PSE&G moves it to the outside of homes and businesses. A utility technician relights all appliances and make sure they are safely working before leaving a home.



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In most cases, PSE&G is able to install the new pipes without digging in lawns. If digging is required, lawn areas, shrubs or other vegetation affected by the work is restored. Grass areas are raked and seeded.

PSE&G repairs roads with temporary pavement until the ground settles. This takes about 45 to 90 days, depending on the weather and soil conditions. The utility then restores the roads with permanent paving in accordance with town ordinance and paving requirements.

Safe and sound utility infrastructure is critical to the vitality of all towns. When the PSE&G upgrades are complete, residents will enjoy the benefits of a continued safe and reliable gas supply now and for many years to come.

Additional information about gas main replacements, including maps and a video about the work, is available at

www.pseg.com/gaswork