



PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS



IN CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
June 15, 2011

CONTACT:
Lisa Marie Burcar
916-446-0400

NATURAL GAS PIPELINES NEED HEIGHTENED SAFETY, PUBLIC INSPECTORS

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Last year’s natural gas pipeline explosion in San Bruno, California resulted in eight fatalities and highlighted the urgent need for improved safety procedures in transporting natural gas. This was followed by a similar explosion in Pennsylvania which claimed the lives of five.

Independent on-site public inspectors during the construction and testing of natural gas pipelines are the key to protecting the public against future explosions. At today’s meeting of the U.S. Department of Transportation Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration’s (PHMSA) Technical Advisory Subcommittee, Professional Engineers in California Government (PECG) urged improved federal requirements for an adequate number of experienced on-site inspectors employed by responsible federal or state agencies.

“Public safety must be at the core of new federal pipeline safety regulations”, said Ryan Endean, who presented PECG’s position at the meeting. “It is critical that public inspectors take a much more prominent role in the inspection of new transmission pipelines and the testing of existing lines to ensure public safety. The explosions have demonstrated that corporations who are beholden to their shareholders do not always have the safety of the public as priority one.”

Because federal and state agencies have difficulty retaining trained, experienced inspectors, Endean urged the panel to require adequate salaries and training of inspectors to safeguard public safety.

Because the pipelines which exploded were installed several decades ago, Endean urged that new federal legislation and regulations require a procedure to test older pipelines which until now have been exempt or “grandfathered”. This testing process is already underway in California. Federal regulations should also address inspection of pipe fabrication and accurate record keeping which would be available to the public.

ABOUT PECG

PECG represents 13,000 state-employed engineers and related professionals responsible for designing and inspecting California’s infrastructure, improving air and water quality, and developing clean energy and green technology. For more information visit <http://www.pecg.org>.