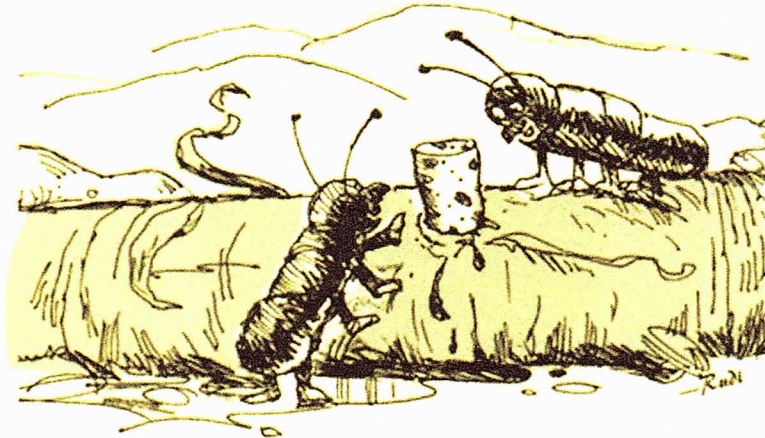


December 2002

## Pipeline safety meetings held

Community education meetings about pipeline safety were held on November 18, 19, 20, and 21 in Bernalillo, Placitas, Cañon, and La Madera. The events were sponsored by the Sandoval County Office of Emergency Services and Citizens for Safe Pipelines. Safety educators from the Danielle Dawn Smalley Foundation presented a program that included a slide show, and they also answered questions from the audience. The Danielle Dawn Smalley Foundation was established in 1996 after Danielle was killed in a pipeline explosion.



Sandoval County contains several large pipelines that carry natural gas and refined petroleum products. The National Transportation Safety Board has recommended that people who live in communities near these potential hazards learn about them and what to do (and what not to do) if a pipeline breaks.

The safety educators pointed out that our country is crisscrossed with more than 1.7 million miles of underground high-pressure pipelines. Most accidents are caused by excavation, so laws in every state require a call to the pipeline company at least forty-eight to seventy-eight hours before digging. Contact numbers can be found on the markers that are usually near pipelines. The One Call number for New Mexico is (800) 321-2537.

Pipelines are also subject to leaks because they are aging and often not adequately inspected or maintained. They are also subject to terrorist attack, so citizens should report any suspicious activity around pipelines to law enforcement. Sound and smell—as well as sight—may be helpful in detecting a leak.

The DDS Foundation brochure offers the following guidelines for citizen response to pipeline emergencies:

A liquid petroleum product may appear as an accumulation of material on the ground on top of or near a pipeline [as was the case in the 1999 Placitas leak]. Certain products when released will vaporize and can be seen as a mist or dense cloud. An area of dead or discolored vegetation, in

an otherwise green pipeline right-of-way, may indicate a leak. If a leaked commodity has ignited, flames would be the most obvious signs of an emergency.

- A high-pressure liquid pipeline leak may be detected by a hissing or roaring sound. The loudness of the sound will depend on the size of the leak.
- A strange or unusual odor in the area of a pipeline may indicate a leak.

If you encounter any of these signs, the DDS Foundation advises the following list of dos and don'ts:

- Don't light a match, start an engine, activate any electrical switch (including lights), or otherwise do anything that may cause a spark.
- Don't drive into a vapor cloud.
- Leave the area immediately on foot.
- Refrain from any activity that might cause heat or sparks.
- Turn off any running machinery.
- Don't come in contact with any escaping material, because some products are toxic and/or corrosive.
- Notify 911 or emergency personnel once you are clear of the danger area.

For more information, contact the DDS Foundation at 972-472-6500 or go to [www.smalleyfnd.org](http://www.smalleyfnd.org).

## **Pipeline study delayed**

The release draft environmental impact study for the refurbishment of the old Tex-New Mex pipeline has again been delayed. This project and the issue of pipeline safety in general are of particular interest to residents of the Estancia Valley and Placitas because several large pipelines pass through the area. The proposed New Mexico Products Pipeline passes near residential areas, schools, and under the parking lot of the Placitas Community Center.

Shell Pipeline Company, LLC, proposed nearly a year ago to reactivate the forty-five-year-old Tex-New Mex for the transport of refined petroleum products including gasoline.

The Bureau of Land Management is overseeing the required EIS. Project manager Joe Jaramillo announced last month that the release of the EIS, which was originally expected last summer, would be delayed until January 2003.

Jaramillo said that among other things, the age of the pipeline is being looked at very critically. He said that the draft EIS would contain five alternatives: the action proposed by Shell, no action or refusal of the permit, pipeline replacement in sensitive areas, pipeline reroute, and the proposed action with added safety measures.

Release of the draft EIS will initiate another public comment period. For more information on the project, go to the BLM Web site at [www.nm.blm.gov](http://www.nm.blm.gov) and follow the link to the New Mexico Products Pipeline. Comments and concerns may be addressed to your congressional delegation.