

Smalley Foundation offers guidance in pipeline safety, PVFD participates

—Citizens for Safe Pipelines November 2002

On August 24, 1996, Danielle was packed and ready to go. The next day, she would start college. Unfortunately, no one had ever told her or her family anything about the pipelines that ran through their community. That afternoon, when they smelled gas, Danielle and her friend jumped in the car and went to warn neighbors. That decision had tragic consequences.

A nearby pipeline had ruptured in the road. Neither young person recognized the Old Faithful-style gusher for the butane that it was. The car's engine ignited the cloud of butane and the fire destroyed fifteen acres around it. Danielle and her friend died.

The National Transportation Safety Board investigated the accident. In addition to criticizing the company for failing to maintain its pipeline, the NTSB concluded that if there had been better community education about pipelines—how to recognize when there was a leak and what to do (and not to do) in the event of a leak—neither Danielle nor her friend might have died.

In response, Danielle's father created the Danielle Dawn Smalley Foundation. The foundation's purpose is to educate rural communities, schools, and first responders about pipelines and to promote safety around pipelines. Their services are free of charge.

The Danielle Dawn Smalley Foundation will be coming to the East Mountains and Sandoval County to hold community education meetings about pipeline safety. On November 19 at 7:00 p.m. there will be a meeting for community members and first responders at Placitas Elementary School.

If you don't live near pipelines, should you still come to the meeting? Yes, for two important reasons.

First, pipelines are in many places that you may not even know about. In addition to the corridor of five hazardous-liquid pipelines that traverses our area, there are pipelines along I-25, beneath some of the bridges we use, and near many public facilities. They traverse quietly beneath subdivisions where you may visit friends. If you think you're never near a pipeline, you're probably wrong.

Second, liquid pipelines can have impact zones that are very different from where the pipelines are. In a rupture, the liquid flows downhill just like any other liquid. As a result, impact zones can be miles long and miles away from the pipeline. In addition, some liquids form gas clouds that fill low-lying areas rather than stay next to the pipeline.

In short, someday you may be—like Danielle—driving down a road and seeing something unusual. Come learn what it might look like and what to do or not do.

Does this mean pipelines in our area are unsafe? No. Pipeline accidents are infrequent. Think about school fire drills. The fact that your school has fire drills doesn't mean your school is

unsafe. In fact, it means just the opposite. It means that people who care about you care enough to plan for your safety even if something unexpected happens. Come and learn how to keep yourself safe if an unexpected pipeline accident happens.

Has an accident ever happened near here?

In Sandoval County, there have been four hazardous liquid pipeline spills in the last five years. The spills were: 250 gallons of propane, twenty-five hundred gallons of jet fuel, five thousand gallons of diesel, and twenty-five thousand gallons of crude oil.

Fortunately, no one was hurt in any of these accidents. Let's keep it that way!

What government organizations are participating in this effort? The overall effort is being coordinated by Sandoval County. Other participants include the New Mexico Pipeline Safety Bureau, Bernalillo School District, Zia Pueblo, City of Albuquerque Open Space Division, and the Bureau of Land Management. On November 19, you will meet Paul Bearce, chief of the Placitas Fire Brigade, as well as other volunteer fire brigade members, and learn more about what they do.

If you can't make it to the meeting, there will be another evening meeting scheduled for the East Mountain area. Watch your mailbox and newspaper for more information.

The Web site for the Danielle Dawn Smalley Foundation is www.smalleyfnd.org. The NTSB report on the accident that led to the formation of the foundation can be found at www.nts.gov/Publictn/P_Acc.htm. (Scroll down to Pipeline Rupture, Liquid Butane Release and Fire, Lively, Texas, August 24, 1996.) Clark "Sparkie" Speakman, Sandoval County Fire Marshall, can be reached at 867-0245 or fmosparkie@aol.com. Questions can also be e-mailed to Citizens for Safe Pipelines at safepipelines@att.net.

Please come to the meeting on November 19 at 7:00 p.m. at Placitas Elementary School. Enjoy refreshments with your neighbors, meet your volunteer fire brigade, and acquire some useful information. We hope to see you there!

Our thanks to Las Placitas Association, the Placitas Recycling Center, and the *Signpost* for helping with our community education efforts.