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DOCKET# 37093
DOCUMENT# 192077

Docket No. 37093

Tri-County Natural Gas Authority
P. O. Box 247
Union Point, GA 30669

REF: Comprehensive Inspection # JB22-001

☐ Certified Mail ☐ Regular Mail ☑ Email

Attention: Mr. Lanier Rhodes

On March 7, 2022, a representative of the Georgia Public Service Commission Pipeline/Facilities Safety Office conducted an inspection of your gas system. The enclosed inspection report numbered JB22-001 is provided for your information and file.

In conjunction with this inspection report, Staff has recommended the following enforcement(s):

Enforcement Action:

- ☑ Notice of Probable Violation
- ☐ Notice of Probable Violation with Proposed Civil Penalty
- ☑ Notice of Amendment

Enforcement Letter:

- ☑ Warning Letter
- ☑ Letter of Concern

Enforcement Notification:

- ☑ Observed Issue
- ☐ No Violation

Please review and respond to this report in accordance with the attached Instructions for Responding to Enforcement Actions, Enforcement Letters, and Notifications Issued by the Georgia Public Service Commission. Please refer to Docket No. 37093 in your response.

Please let me know if there are any questions concerning this report at (404) 463-6526 or michellet@psc.state.ga.us. Thank you for your continuing contribution toward increased pipeline safety.

Sincerely,

Michelle Thebert

Michelle L. Thebert
Director, Office of Pipeline Safety/Facilities Protection

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REPORT OF NATURAL GAS SAFETY

INSPECTION NO: JB22-001

OPERATOR: Tri-County Natural Gas Authority

INVESTIGATOR: Jeff Baggett

INSPECTION DATE: March 7, 2022 REPORT MAILED DATE: November 8, 2022

Any questions concerning this report may be directed to the above address or by telephoning (404) 463-6526.

1. PURPOSE OF INSPECTION

To conduct a comprehensive inspection of the Operators plans, programs, procedures, pipeline, and pipeline facilities for compliance with the minimum federal safety standards in 49CFR Parts 191 and 192.

2. CONTINUING VIOLATIONS

Violation	Description	Inspection#	Date
192.619(a)	No person may operate a segment of steel or plastic pipeline at a pressure that exceeds a maximum...	JS18-042	12/17/2018

3. CLEARED VIOLATIONS

4. NEW VIOLATIONS

Violation	Description	Inspection#	Date
191.11	Distribution system: Annual report.	JB22-001	3/7/2022
192.747(a)	Each valve, the use of which may be necessary for the safe operation of a distribution system, m...	JB22-001	3/7/2022
192.615(c)	Each operator shall establish and maintain liaison with appropriate fire, police, and other...	JB22-001	3/7/2022
192.465(a)	Each pipeline that is under cathodic protection must be tested at least once each calendar year...	JB22-001	3/7/2022
192.517(a)	Each operator shall make, and retain for the useful life of the pipeline, a record of each test...	JB22-001	3/7/2022
192.723(b)(1)	A leakage survey with leak detector equipment must be conducted in business districts, including...	JB22-001	3/7/2022
192.491(c)	Each operator shall maintain a record of each test, survey, or inspection required by this sub...	JB22-001	3/7/2022
192.181(a)	Each high-pressure distribution system must have valves spaced so as to reduce the time to...	JB22-001	3/7/2022
192.605(b)(9)	Taking adequate precautions in excavated trenches to protect personnel from the hazards of unsafe...	JB22-001	3/7/2022
192.721(b)	Mains in places or on structures where anticipated physical movement or external loading could...	JB22-001	3/7/2022
192.615(a)(8)	Notifying appropriate fire, police, and other public officials of gas pipeline emergencies and...	JB22-001	3/7/2022
192.455 (e)	Aluminum may not be installed in a buried or submerged pipeline if that aluminum is exposed to an...	JB22-001	3/7/2022
192.479(b)	Coating material must be suitable for the prevention of atmospheric corrosion.	JB22-001	3/7/2022
192.615(a)(6)	Emergency shutdown and pressure reduction in any section of the operator's pipeline system neces...	JB22-001	3/7/2022
192.615(a)(4)	The availability of personnel, equipment, tools, and materials, as needed at the scene of an...	JB22-001	3/7/2022

5. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS/COMMENTS

SEE ATTACHED INSPECTION REPORT

Between March 7 and August 25, 2022, Staff conducted a comprehensive inspection of the Tri-County Natural Gas System's plans, programs and facilities for compliance with the minimum federal safety standards in 49CFR, Parts 192 and 192.

During this inspection the Operator was represented by:
Lanier Rhodes – Chairman of the Board, Tri-County Natural Gas
Wendell Matthews – Gas Superintendent
Ronnie Stovall – Gas Supervisor
Denise Channell – Regulatory Compliance
Wayne Jackson – Treasurer, Tri-County Natural Gas
Chris Cawley – MGAG/SRCS (Consultant)
Lori Lamberth – MGAG/SRCS (Consultant)
Gene Taylor – MGAG/SRCS (Consultant)

Commission Staff was represented by:
Michelle Thebert – Director, Facilities Protection Unit
Jeff Baggett – Supervisor, Facilities Protection Unit - Lead Inspector
Joe Jones – Pipeline Safety Inspector
Daniel Clemmons – Pipeline Safety Inspector
Alan Towe – Pipeline Safety Inspector

At the time of this inspection the Tri-County Natural Gas System was under one (1) previously existing probable violation. Staff reviewed this violation with the Operator and due to the fact that they are still consolidating records from each of the systems that are merging Staff elected not to review this violation at this time.

Staff notes that this inspection was conducted shortly after the Tri-County Natural Gas System had merged with and acquired the facilities which were previously owned and operated by the City of Greensboro and the City of Union Point natural gas systems.

NOTICE OF PROBABLE VIOLATION

As a result of this inspection Staff found that the Tri-County Natural Gas System was in probable violation of the minimum federal safety standards; specifically:

1. §192.465 External corrosion control: Monitoring.
   (a) Each pipeline that is under cathodic protection must be tested at least once each calendar year, but with intervals not exceeding 15 months, to determine whether the cathodic protection meets the requirements of §192.463. However, if tests at those intervals are impractical for separately protected short sections of mains or transmission lines, not in excess of 100 feet (30 meters), or separately protected service lines, these pipelines may be surveyed on a sampling basis. At least 10 percent of these protected structures, distributed over the entire system must be surveyed each calendar year, with a different 10 percent checked each subsequent year, so that the entire system is tested in each 10-year period.

   STAFFS COMMENTS: During this inspection Staff noted that the Operator has 54 isolated services in their system, and they are performing the monitoring of these services on a sampling method across a 10-year period. The Operator could not demonstrate why it is impractical for them to monitor these 54 isolated services annually.

PROBABLE VIOLATION: The Operator failed to monitor each pipeline that is under cathodic protection at least once each calendar year, but with intervals not exceeding 15 months.

2. §192.491 Corrosion control records.
   (c) Each operator shall maintain a record of each test, survey, or inspection required by this subpart in sufficient detail to demonstrate the adequacy of corrosion control measures or that a corrosive condition does not exist. These records must be retained for at least 5 years with the following exceptions:
      (1) Operators must retain records related to §§ 192.465(a) and (e) and 192.475(b) for as long as the pipeline remains in service.
      (2) Operators must retain records of the two most recent atmospheric corrosion inspections for each distribution service line that is being inspected under the interval in § 192.481(a)(2).

STAFFS COMMENTS: Under §192.453 it states that: "The corrosion control procedures required by §192.605(b)(2), including those for the design, installation, operation, and maintenance of cathodic protection systems, must be carried out by, or under the direction of, a person qualified in pipeline corrosion control methods."

Section 9-A of the Operators O&M Procedures addresses the qualification of personnel performing operations and maintenance tasks on their cathodic protection systems. The monitoring of rectifiers is addressed in Section 9-G(b) of the manual, and references OQ Procedure 0101. In the OQ procedure it states that "This activity is a covered task under the Operator Qualification Plan and may only be performed by or directed and observed by an individual who is currently qualified to perform this task. Refer to the OQ Plan for specific qualification requirements."

During this inspection Staff reviewed records for the Operators rectifier monitoring required under §192.465(b); Staff noted that the records fail to identify who the individual was that performed the monitoring.

PROBABLE VIOLATION: The Operator failed to maintain a record of each test, survey, or inspection required by this subpart in sufficient detail to demonstrate the adequacy of corrosion control measures.

3. §192.517 Records.
   (a) An operator must make, and retain for the useful life of the pipeline, a record of each test performed under §§192.505, 192.506, and 192.507. The record must contain at least the following information:
      (1) The operator's name, the name of the operator's employee responsible for making the test, and the name of any test company used.

STAFFS COMMENTS: Section 10-I of the Operators O&M Procedures manual states that: "(a) Tri-County Natural Gas will make and retain for the useful life of the pipeline, a record of each test performed under Sections 10-B, 10-C, and 10-D of this manual. The record will contain at least the following information: (1) Tri-County Natural Gas, the name of the employee responsible for making the test, and the name of any test company used."

During this inspection Staff reviewed pressure test records which failed to identify the name of the operator's employee responsible for making the test.

PROBABLE VIOLATION: The Tri-County Gas System failed to make and retain records for their pressure tests as required by §192.517(a)(1) and their O&M Procedures.

WARNING LETTER

1) 49CFR, §192.615 Emergency plans.
   (a) Each operator shall establish written procedures to minimize the hazard resulting from a gas pipeline emergency. At a minimum, the procedures must provide for the following:
      (8) Notifying appropriate fire, police, and other public officials of gas pipeline emergencies and coordinating with them both planned responses and actual responses during an emergency.

STAFFS COMMENTS: Staff noted that in the Tri-County Natural Gas System Emergency Manual, in Section VI, "Making Safe any Actual or Potential Hazard (Reference - §192.615(a)(7)(8))" the procedure does not mention any 911 center, and does not addresses coordination with "fire, police, and other public officials" until after the Operator has already responded to the scene.

Staff then reviewed the Operators procedures for liaison required by §192.615(c), which are in Section X of the Tri-County Natural Gas System's Emergency Procedures Manual. Staff noted that in following the instructions in the plan, that in Item 4(c) the reader is referred, to Appendix S, and to Appendix T-1, which appears to only require that the Operator provide notice for reportable incidents, and not for the Operators planned response to emergencies as identified in §192.615(a)(3).

PROBABLE VIOLATION: The Tri-County Natural Gas System could not provide records which demonstrated that they have notified the appropriate fire, police, and other public officials of gas pipeline emergencies and coordinated with them both their planned responses and actual responses during an emergency.

NOTICE OF AMENDMENT

1) 49CFR, §191.11 Distribution system: Annual report.
   (a) General. Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this section, each operator of a distribution pipeline system must submit an annual report for that system on DOT Form PHMSA F 7100.1-1. This report must be submitted each year, not later than March 15, for the preceding calendar year.

STAFFS COMMENTS: Prior to this inspection Staff noted that the Lost and Unaccounted for gas numbers reported by the City of Union Point and the Tri-County Gas System for CY2021 appeared to be significantly out of a normal range. Staff requested the source data for all three Operators and performed their own calculations which indicated that the numbers provided by the Operator differ significantly from the numbers which were reported to PHMSA for CY's 2018 through 2021.

	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	Reported on 7100	Calculated by Staff	Reported on 7100	Calculated by Staff	Reported on 7100	Calculated by Staff	Reported on 7100	Calculated by Staff
Greensboro	-2.4 %	-1.41 %	0 %	.65 %	0 %	-.8 %	1.3 %	-1.29 %
Union Point	0 %	5.64 %	.09 %	20.75 %	0 %	-3.23 %	20.4 %	-19.38 %
Tri-County	0 %	59.98 %	0 %	75.46 %	0 %	79.28 %	-22.5 %	36.68 %

Staff notes that prior to CY2018 the instructions for completing the annual 7100 reports were to: "State the amount of unaccounted for gas as a percent of total consumption for the 12 months ending June 30

of the reporting year." However, operators were also instructed "Do not report "gained" gas. If a net gain of gas is indicated by the calculations, report "0%" here." Beginning in CY2018 PHMSA revised the reporting instructions to remove the language regarding gained gas.

Subsequent to Staff's on-site inspection the Operator advised that they had identified an issue with their "Brick House "metering station, and that they had replaced that meter. They advised that are going to monitor this meter through the end of the year to see if this issue is corrected.

REQUIRED AMENDMENT: The Tri-County Natural Gas System must amend the annual 7100 reports for The City of Greensboro, The City of Union Point, and the Tri-County Gas systems to correctly identify the lost and unaccounted for gas for each system.

2) 49 CFR, §192.181 - Distribution line valves:
   (a) Each high-pressure distribution system must have valves spaced so as to reduce the time to shut down a section of main in an emergency. The valve spacing is determined by the operating pressure, the size of the mains, and the local physical conditions.

   STAFFS COMMENTS: During this inspection the Operator was unable to provide a process for the placement of distribution line valves in accordance with Part 192.181. Because the Operator could not define where these valves are required Staff could not determine if the Operator could perform an emergency shutdown and/or pressure reduction in any section of their pipeline system if it were necessary to minimize hazards to life or property as required by §192.615(a)(6).

   Because the Operator could not demonstrate an actual process of how they determine where to install specific valves, Staff cannot determine if the Operator has complied with the requirements of §192.181(a), or if they can meet the requirements of §192.615(a)(6).

   REQUIRED AMENDMENT: The Tri-County Natural Gas System must amend their procedures to address the placement of distribution line valves for their system.

3) 49CFR, §192.455 External corrosion control: Buried or submerged pipelines installed after July 31, 1971.
   (e) Aluminum may not be installed in a buried or submerged pipeline if that aluminum is exposed to an environment with a natural pH in excess of 8, unless tests or experience indicate its suitability in the particular environment involved.

   STAFFS COMMENTS: The Tri-County Natural Gas System's O&M Procedures for buried or submerged pipelines installed after July 31, 1971 do not address the requirements of §192.455(e). Staff notes that Section 9-F of their O&M procedures indicates that they do not have buried or submerged amphoteric metal, however, Staff found no indication that the Tri-County Natural Gas System prevents the installation of aluminum in their system.

   REQUIRED AMENDMENT: The Tri-County Natural Gas System must amend their procedures to address the requirements of §192.455(e).

4) 49CFR, §192.479 Atmospheric corrosion control; General.
   (b) Coating material must be suitable for the prevention of atmospheric corrosion.

STAFFS COMMENTS: The Tri-County Natural Gas System's requirements for coating of pipelines is addressed in Section 9-O of their O&M Procedures Manual. Section (b)(1) of this section states: "See Tri-County Natural Gas System's Construction Manual for specification related to this coating material.)"

In addition, in Section 9- E of the Tri-County Natural Gas System O&M Procedures manual, in Item (f) it states: "Tri-County Natural Gas System will select and apply, including surface preparation, a coating as appropriate for the situation and as determined by a person qualified to perform pipeline corrosion control design per Section 9-A(b)(1) in accordance with standards and specifications included in Tri-County Natural Gas System's Construction Manual."

Prior to the completion of this inspection the Operator provided Staff with a copy of their "Construction Manual." Section 23 of this manual addresses "Coatings and Wraps," however, there is no mention of the materials that should be used clean and coat each pipeline or portion of pipeline that is exposed to the atmosphere as stated under 9-O of their O&M Procedures.

REQUIRED AMENDMENT: The Tri-County Natural Gas System must amend their procedures to address the requirements of §192.479(b).

5) 49CFR, §192.605 Procedural manual for operations, maintenance, and emergencies
(b) Maintenance and normal operations. The manual required by paragraph (a) of this section must include procedures for the following, if applicable, to provide safety during maintenance and operations.
(9) Taking adequate precautions in excavated trenches to protect personnel from the hazards of unsafe accumulations of vapor or gas, and making available when needed at the excavation, emergency rescue equipment, including a breathing apparatus and, a rescue harness and line.

STAFFS COMMENTS: Section 12-F of the Tri-County Natural Gas System's O&M Procedures Manual addresses precautions in excavated trenches. This section references Non-OQ Procedure 05 - Precautions in Excavated Trenches. Procedure 05 addresses a Rescue Plan which "provides a basic tenet for the rescue of personnel in trenches or excavations." However, Procedure 05 fails to reference OQ Procedure 1321-1341 - Damage Prevention During Excavation Activities By or On Behalf of the Operator and to Provide or Assure Adequate Pipeline Support During Operator Initiated Excavation Activities.

REQUIRED AMENDMENT: The Tri-County Natural Gas System must amend their procedures to ensure their personnel are aware of the requirements of both Procedure 05 and Procedure 1321-1341.

6) 49CFR, §192.615 Emergency plans.
(a) Each operator shall establish written procedures to minimize the hazard resulting from a gas pipeline emergency. At a minimum, the procedures must provide for the following:
(4) The availability of personnel, equipment, tools, and materials, as needed at the scene of an emergency.

STAFFS COMMENTS: In the Tri-County Natural Gas System Emergency Procedures Manual, in Section IV - Availability of Personnel, Equipment, Tools, and Materials as Needed at the Scene of an Emergency, it states: "In responding to a gas pipeline emergency, it is essential that the proper personnel, equipment, tools, and materials are available." and "See Appendix H-1 for Tri-County Natural Gas System's procedures for assuring the availability of personnel, materials and tools."

Staff found that Appendix H-1 did not address the availability of equipment which the Operator would require at the scene of an emergency.

REQUIRED AMENDMENT: Tri-County Natural Gas must amend their procedures to ensure the availability of personnel, equipment, tools, and materials as needed at the scene of an emergency.

7) 49CFR, §192.615 Emergency plans.
(a) Each operator shall establish written procedures to minimize the hazard resulting from a gas pipeline emergency. At a minimum, the procedures must provide for the following:
(6) Emergency shutdown and pressure reduction in any section of the operator's pipeline system necessary to minimize hazards to life or property.

STAFFS COMMENTS: Emergency Shut-Down and Pressure Reduction are addressed in Sec V of the Tri-County Natural Gas System Emergency Procedures Manual. Staff found that while there is guidance in Section V for developing an emergency shutdown procedure, there is not an actual procedure in place. Additionally, the most specific instructions for personnel performing any shutdown appear to be in the referenced Appendix L, however, that appendix has a disclaimer which states that: "The purpose of this Appendix is to provide the user with a guide to aid in this process. Use of this form is at the discretion of the Tri-County Natural Gas System."

REQUIRED AMENDMENT: The Tri-County Natural Gas System must amend their procedures for emergency shutdown and pressure reduction to provide a procedure for their personnel to follow in the event an emergency shutdown or pressure reduction is required in any section of their system.

8) §192.615 Emergency plans.
(c) Each operator must establish and maintain liaison with the appropriate public safety answering point (i.e., 9-1-1 emergency call center) where direct access to a 9-1-1 emergency call center is available from the location of the pipeline, as well as fire, police, and other public officials, to:
(1) Learn the responsibility and resources of each government organization that may respond to a gas pipeline emergency;
(2) Acquaint the officials with the operator's ability in responding to a gas pipeline emergency;
(3) Identify the types of gas pipeline emergencies of which the operator notifies the officials; and,
(4) Plan how the operator and officials can engage in mutual assistance to minimize hazards to life or property.

STAFFS COMMENTS: Staff found that liaison activities are addressed in Section X of the Tri-County Emergency Procedures Manual. Item 3 of this section states that the list of liaison contacts in maintained in Appendix C. Staff reviewed Appendix C and noted that it identifies various county sheriff departments, county chairs, city councils, fire chiefs, etc. However, Staff advised the Operator that after reviewing the GA-811 locate ticket system they identified approximately 157 other utility operators in their operating area, most of which are not identified in Appendix C. Staff also noted that the 911 Centers for their four-county area were not listed in Appendix C.

Staff also noted that the Operators liaison messaging does not specifically address their ability to respond to a gas pipeline emergency, and their means of communication.

REQUIRED AMENDMENT: The Tri-County Gas System must update Appendix C of their Emergency Plan to identify each of the appropriate public safety answering points, fire departments,

police agencies, and other public officials that they are required to establish and maintained liaison with for their four-county operating area. They must also amend their liaison messaging to address their ability in responding to a natural gas emergency.

9) 49CFR, §192.721 Distribution systems: Patrolling.
(b) Mains in places or on structures where anticipated physical movement or external loading could cause failure or leakage must be patrolled -
(1) In business districts, at intervals not exceeding 4 1/2 months, but at least four times each calendar year; and
(2) Outside business districts, at intervals not exceeding 7 1/2 months, but at least twice each calendar year.

STAFFS COMMENTS: Patrolling is addressed in Section 13-O of the Tri-County Natural Gas System's O&M Procedures Manual. Staff found that this section merely repeats the code requirements and then refers the reader to Appendices V-4, V-5 and V-6. Staff reviewed patrolling records with the Operator and found that the City of Union Point had identified no areas requiring patrols; the City of Greensboro was performing patrols, but their procedure did not list all of the areas they were patrolling; and the Tri-County System had records documenting patrols, but their procedure did not identify what these areas were.

REQUIRED AMENDMENT: The Tri-County Natural Gas System must amend their procedure, and the associated Distribution Patrolling Report Form, for compliance with §192.721(b) to identify the areas that their personnel are required to patrol.

10) 49CFR, §192.723 Distribution systems: Leakage surveys.
(b) The type and scope of the leakage control program must be determined by the nature of the operations and the local conditions, but it must meet the following minimum requirements:
(1) A leakage survey with leak detector equipment must be conducted in business districts, including tests of the atmosphere in gas, electric, telephone, sewer, and water system manholes, at cracks in pavement and sidewalks, and at other locations providing an opportunity for finding gas leaks, at intervals not exceeding 15 months, but at least once each calendar year.

STAFFS COMMENTS: In the Tri-County Natural Gas System Operations & Maintenance procedures manual, in Section 13-P Distribution Systems - Leakage Surveys, in Item (c) it states: "In determining business districts for periodic leak survey purposes, Tri-County Natural Gas System will consider the following: (1) Areas where the public regularly congregates or where the majority of the buildings on either side of the street are regularly utilized, for industrial, commercial, financial, educational, religious, health or recreational purposes. (2) Areas where gas and other underground facilities are congested under continuous street and sidewalk paving that extends to the building walls on one or both sides of the street." Under Item (e) - Related information, of this procedure it refers the reader to Appendix V-5 - Identification of business district(s).

Staff notes that the Operator had just completed a system wide leak survey as part of their recent merger, however, Staff was not able to review the records because their contractor had not provided them to the Operator at the time of this inspection. Staff advised the Operator that their procedure restates the guidance from the GPTC Guide for Gas Transmission and Distribution Piping Systems, but it does not identify the Operators business districts.

REQUIRED AMENDMENT: The Tri-County Natural Gas System must amend their procedure for identification of their business district to ensure that those areas are surveyed as required, and to provide for a periodic review of those areas to modify them when required.

11) 49CFR, §192.747 Valve maintenance: Distribution systems.
(a) Each valve, the use of which may be necessary for the safe operation of a distribution system, must be checked and serviced at intervals not exceeding 15 months, but at least once each calendar year.

STAFFS COMMENTS: In the Tri-County Natural Gas System Operations & Maintenance procedures manual, in Section 13-W Valve Maintenance - Distribution Systems, in Item (a) it states: "Each valve, the use of which may be necessary for the safe operation of the distribution system, will be checked and serviced at intervals not exceeding 15 months, but at least once each calendar year." The Operators procedure then references "OQ Procedure 0331-0341 - Valve - Visual Inspection & Partial Operation, Preventative Maintenance Manual Service Line Shut-Off, and Regular Scheduled Maintenance."

Staff reviewed the Tri-County Natural Gas System's procedures in Section 13-W of their O&M Procedures manual and referenced procedure 0331-0441 - Valve - Visual Inspection & Partial Operation, Preventative Maintenance Manual Service Line Shut-Off, and Regular Scheduled Maintenance. Staff noted that while the purpose of this procedure is to ensure that each valve that may be used for the safe operation of a Distribution system is checked and serviced, as needed, the procedure does not actually require the operation of the valve.

Staff explained to the Operator that they were unclear as to how they could take remedial action to correct any valve found inoperable as required by §192.747(b) without operating the valve during the annual check and service required by §192.747(a).

REQUIRED AMENDMENT: The Tri-County Natural Gas System must amend their procedures required by §192.747(a) to clearly indicate that each valve, the use of which may be necessary for the safe operation of their distribution system, must be checked to ensure that it is operational during its annual service.

LETTER OF CONCERN

1) §192.491 Corrosion control records.
(a) Each operator shall maintain records or maps to show the location of cathodically protected piping, cathodic protection facilities, galvanic anodes, and neighboring structures bonded to the cathodic protection system. Records or maps showing a stated number of anodes, installed in a stated manner or spacing, need not show specific distances to each buried anode.

STAFFS CONCERN: During this inspection Staff reviewed records for the Operators cathodic protection facilities and their cathodically protected piping. Staff is concerned that the records which are available do not give a complete picture or provide sufficient information on the location of the cathodically protected piping in relation to the Operators cathodic protection facilities.

2) 49CFR, §192.615 Emergency plans.
a) Each operator shall establish written procedures to minimize the hazard resulting from a gas pipeline emergency. At a minimum, the procedures must provide for the following:
(9) Safely restoring any service outage.

STAFFS COMMENTS: Restoration of Service is addressed in Section VII of the Tri-County Natural Gas System's Emergency Procedures Manual. Staff notes that in this procedure it states: "Appendix M contains a guidance that may be used for restoration of service. The purpose of this Appendix is to provide the user with a guide to aid in this process. Use of this form is at the discretion of the Tri-County Natural Gas System."

STAFFS CONCERN: Staff is concerned that the Tri-County Natural Gas System has failed to customize their off-the-shelf emergency plan template to address their specific operation and provide meaningful guidance to their employees. Staff expressed their concern to the Operator that it is not clear if their employees are required to follow Appendix M, or if they get to decide on a case by case basis. If they will use the guidance provided. Staff is also concerned that this failure to fully develop and provide training on these emergency procedures as required by §192.615(b)(2) could interfere with the Operators ability to safely restore service when required.

OBSERVED ISSUE

§192.707 Line markers for mains and transmission lines.

(d) Marker warning. The following must be written legibly on a background of sharply contrasting color on each line marker:

(1) The word "Warning," "Caution," or "Danger" followed by the words "Gas (or name of gas transported) Pipeline" all of which, except for markers in heavily developed urban areas, must be in letters at least 1 inch (25 millimeters) high with ¼ inch (6.4 millimeters) stroke.

(2) The name of the operator and telephone number (including area code) where the operator can be reached at all times.

STAFFS OBSERVATION: The acquisition of the Cities of Greensboro and Union Point into the Tri-County Gas System will require the updating or replacement of pipeline markers through the former operators' territories.

During this inspection Staff also conducted three (3) Protocol 9 OQ Field Evaluations. Wendell Matthews, Gas Superintendent for the Tri-County Gas System performed: Task #0001 – Measure Structure-to-Electrolyte Potential (Pipe-to-Soil) qualified, May 10, 2018 thru May 10, 2023; Task #1261– Walking Gas Leakage Survey, qualified, May 5, 2021 thru May 5, 2024; and Task #1211 – Odorization – Periodic Sampling, qualified, Sep. 23, 2021 Sep 23, 2026.

Staff examined the individual records for Mr. Mathews before observing his performance in the field and verified that his qualification records were current. All tasks were successfully performed according to the operator's procedures, and Mr. Matthews identified both job specific and general abnormal operating conditions for each associated task.

Please review and respond to this report in accordance with the attached Instructions for Responding to Enforcement Letters Issued by the Georgia Public Service Commission.

OPERATOR RESPONSE FORM

Operator Name: TRI-COUNTY NATURAL GAS

Informal Conference Requested: Yes ☐ No ☐

Docket Number: 37093

Responses required within **30 days of electronic mail**. Provide the following information for this report:

Response to Inspection Number:_____

Type of Enforcement Action(s) cited in report:			Informal Conference Requested	
☐ Notice of Probable Violation (NOPV)	☐ New	☐Continuing	☐ Yes	☐ No
☐ Notice of Amendment (NOA)	☐ New	☐Continuing	☐ Yes	☐ No
☐ Warning Letter	☐ New	☐Continuing	☐ Yes	☐ No
☐ Letter of Concern	☐ New	☐Continuing	☐ Yes	☐ No
☐ Observed Issue	☐ New	☐Continuing	☐ Yes	☐ No
☐ Proposed Civil Penalty	$ _____ PCP $ Amount (Total for report)			

Indicate below (A-E) based on the type of Enforcement Actions in this report: (Check all that apply)
Complete a separate copy of Page 2, Operator Response to Enforcement Action, for each cited item.

A. Response for **Notice of Probable Violation** (with and without proposed civil penalty):
   1. ☐ Written statement indicating that corrective measures have achieved Compliance or
   2. ☐ Written plan of action outlining the corrective measures that will be taken to achieve compliance and when compliance is anticipated.

B. Response for **NOA**:
   1. ☐ Contested: Attach written explanation, information, or other material in answer to the allegations in the Notice of Amendment stating your reasons for objecting to the NOA, in whole or in part; or
   2. ☐ Not Contested: Explanation, information, or other material believed to warrant modification of the NOA in whole or in part; or
   3. ☐ Written request for clarification. (Attached)

C. Response for **Continuing** and/or **Existing** violations:
   Current status, updates, expected completion dates, proposed modifications, etc., of the continuing and/or existing violations, even if this information was previously provided. Referencing a previously filed response letter, as status, updates, etc. alone is not sufficient for this response. Failure to provide this information may result in formal interrogatories from the Director through data requests.

D. Response for ☐ **Letter of Concern** / ☐ **Warning Letter**
   I acknowledge receipt of the Letter of Concern/Warning Letter:_____
   SIGNATURE / TITLE

   Additional Comments: (Optional)_____

E. Response for **Observed Issue** and **No Violation**: (Optional Response)
   Staff requests that the Operator acknowledge receipt of the Observed Issue/No Violation in writing, or by submitting an email to the FPU Director

Operator Response to Enforcement Action

Enforcement Action for:_____ ☐ New Violation ☐ Continuing Violation
Enter Code / Commission Rule (Complete a separate attachment for each enforcement action)

Enforcement Action(s) cited in report:	Conference Requested:	
☐ Notice of Probable Violation (NOPV)	☐ Yes ☐ No	$_____
☐ Notice of Amendment (NOA)	☐ Yes ☐ No	Proposed Penalty for this violation
☐ Warning Letter	☐ Yes ☐ No	
☐ Letter of Concern	☐ Yes ☐ No	
☐ Observed Issue	☐ Yes ☐ No	
☐ Proposed Civil Penalty	☐ Yes ☐ No	

OPERATORS RESPONSE: _____

Response Provided by: _____ Date:_____
Name / Title

Internal use only:

Lead Inspector: _____ Date Response Reviewed:_____

Actions Acceptable: ☐ Yes ☐No Re-inspection Needed:☐ Yes ☐ No Clear Violation:☐ Yes ☐ No

Supervisor Review by:_____ Date Reviewed:_____

Additional Enforcement Recommended: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Director Review

Approved: ☐ Yes ☐No Schedule Special Follow-up Inspection: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Cleared Violation: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments:_____

Filings:
For all written responses or any other official correspondence, the Operator shall file the response at the following address:

Ms. Sallie Tanner, Executive Secretary
Georgia Public Service Commission
244 Washington Street, SW
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

The Operator must file **five (5)** copies of any response and/or official correspondence, as well as a CD with an electronic version of the response in Microsoft Word and/or a PDF, if applicable.

Informal Conference:
Any Operator who chooses to request an informal conference shall request such a conference through emailing the Director (michellet@psc.state.ga.us), calling the Director (404-463-2765), or selecting the "Request Conference" choice.

Civil Penalty Payments:
Certified check for the full amount of the recommended civil penalty or consent agreement amount made payable to the Georgia Public Service Commission. The Operator's name, applicable Docket No., and Inspection Report No. must be included on the certified check. Mail payment to:

Ms. Michelle Thebert, Director, Facilities Protection Unit
Georgia Public Service Commission
244 Washington Street
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Hearing Requests:
The Operator has the right to request a hearing before the full Commission to contest the alleged probable violations, recommended civil penalties, and all other proposed actions of enforcement. A request for a hearing must be submitted in writing and in accordance with Commission Rule 515-2-1-.04. The Operator must include a statement of the issues that you intend to raise at the hearing. The issues may relate to the allegations, new information, proposed compliance order, proposed civil penalty, or any other recommendation for enforcement action. Please refer to Commission Rule 515-9-3-.11 and O.C.G.A. § 46-2-91 for assessment considerations upon which civil penalties are based. An operator's failure to specify an issue may result in a waiver of the right to raise that issue at hearing. The request must also indicate whether or not the Operator will be represented by counsel at the hearing.

Open Records and Trade Secret Filings:
The Operator is advised that any material provided to the Commission, and all materials prepared by the Commission, including the Notice of Probable Violations and any Orders issued in this case, may be considered public information and subject to disclosure under the Georgia Open Records Act (O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70 et seq.). If you believe that any portion of your response material is security sensitive, privileged, confidential or may cause your company competitive disadvantages and would qualify for protection under the Commission's "Trade Secret Rule" (Commission Rule 515-3-1-.11), you must, along with the complete original document clearly marked "TRADE SECRET" on each page, provide a second copy of the document with the portions you believe qualify for trade secret treatment redacted, and an explanation of why you believe the redacted information qualifies for such trade secret treatment. Should the Commission receive a request for disclosure of any "TRADE SECRET" material, you will be notified, if after review, the materials and your provided justification are deemed not to meet any exemptions provided in the Georgia Open Records Act. You may appeal the Commission's decision to release material at that time. Your appeal will stay the release of those materials until a final decision is made.

BEFORE THE GEORGIA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
STATE OF GEORGIA

IN THE MATTER OF:	)	
	)	
Violation Report; Notice of Amendment;	)	**DOCKET NO. 37093**
Warning Letter; Letter of Concern;	)	
Observed Issue	)	
Tri – County Natural Gas Authority	)	
Inspection JB22-0001 on March 7, 2022		

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, the undersigned, do hereby certify that I have caused to be served a copy of the foregoing, and a copy of same was served upon all parties and persons listed below via electronic mail as indicated by an asterisk I further certify that the *Tri-County Natural Gas* was served a hard copy of the above-stated document by U.S. Mail, certified/return receipt requested.

*Sallie Tanner, Executive Secretary
Georgia Public Service Commission
244 Washington Street, SW
Atlanta, GA 30334

*The Honorable Lanier Rhodes, Mayor
Tri-County Natural Gas
P.O. Box 247
Union Point, GA 30669
mayorlrhodes@gmail.com

*Michelle Thebert, Facilities Protection Unit Director
Georgia Public Service Commission
244 Washington Street, SW
Atlanta, GA 30334

Respectfully Submitted this 17th day of November 2022:

Cathy Nesbitt

Cathy Nesbitt, Administrative Assistant
Georgia Public Service Commission
Facilities Protection Unit
244 Washington Street, SW
Atlanta, GA 30334