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244 Washington Street, SW
Atlanta, GA 30334-5701

FAX: (404) 463-6532
psc.ga.gov

DOCKET# 37093
DOCUMENT# 227417

Docket No. 37093

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

REF: Follow Up Inspection # JS26-001

☐ Certified Mail ☐ Regular Mail ☑ Email

Attention: Lanier Rhodes

On January 7, 2026, a representative of the Georgia Public Service Commission Pipeline Safety/Facilities Protection Office conducted an on-site inspection of your gas system and found that previously identified probable violation(s) of the Pipeline Safety Regulations have either been cleared or are continuing, as identified below.

- ☒ Previously existing probable violation(s) has/have been cleared.
- ☒ Previously existing probable violation(s) still exist.
- ☐ Additional Enforcement
  - ☐ Notice of Proposed Violation
  - ☐ Notice of Proposed Violation with Proposed Civil Penalty
  - ☐ Warning Letter
  - ☐ Letter of Concern
  - ☐ Observed Issue
- ☐ Consent Agreement Pending

The enclosed inspection report numbered JS26-001 is provided for your information and file.

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) 985-4271 or mthebert@psc.ga.gov. 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: JS26-001

OPERATOR: Tri-County Natural Gas Authority

INVESTIGATOR: Jason Smith

INSPECTION DATE: January 7, 2026 REPORT MAILED DATE: July 29, 2026

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 follow-up inspection of the Operator's previously existing probable violations.

2. CONTINUING VIOLATIONS

Violation	Description	Inspection#	Date
192.181(a)	Each high-pressure distribution system must have valves spaced so as to reduce the time to...	JB22-001	3/7/2022

3. CLEARED VIOLATIONS

Cleared on 1/7/2026

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

4. NEW VIOLATIONS

5. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS/COMMENTS

SEE ATTACHED INSPECTION REPORT

On January 7 and 21, 2026, Staff reported to Tri-County Natural Gas Authority to perform a follow-up inspection on the Operator's previously existing probable violations.

During this inspection the Operator was represented by:
Denise Channell - Regulator Compliance Administrator
Wendell Mathews - Gas Superintendent
Kyle Hamby - MGAG/SRCS (consultant)

Staff was represented by:
Jason Smith - Lead Inspector
Jack Hewitt - Pipeline Safety Inspector
Brian Withrow - Pipeline Safety Inspector

At the time of this inspection, the Tri-County Natural Gas Authority had two (2) previously existing probable violations. Staff reviewed these probable violations with the Operator and determined that:

PROBABLE VIOLATION CLEARED

In regard to the probable violation of 49CFR §192.619(a) which was cited under Inspection Number JS18-042, in that inspection Staff stated:

> "COMMENTS: While examining the Operator's MAOP records, Staff discovered the Operator was not able to provide complete documentation to substantiate the MAOP of their various operating systems (450, 100, 70, 60, 35 and 30) Tri-County Natural Gas does not have sufficient records to substantiate MAOP of their 450psig feeder line / determine whether it's transmission (Tri-County states this is just a feeder line)
>
> PROBABLE VIOLATION: Tri-County Natural Gas did not have complete records to substantiate the established MAOPs."

FIRST OPERATOR RESPONSE: In their response letter dated March 8, 2019, the Operator stated:

> Tri-County has operating records to substantiate the MOAP of its feeder line, as well at the remainder of its facilities.

FIRST FOLLOW-UP INSPECTION: On February 6, 2019, Staff conducted a DIMP Implementation Inspection (Ref: Inspection Number DJ19-008). In this inspection, Staff stated that:

> "At the time of this inspection, Tri-County Natural Gas Department was under two existing probable violations discovered on December 17, 2018, under inspection number JS18-042. The Operator recently received this inspection report and has not had sufficient time to respond to the inspection report. Staff did not address these violations."

SECOND OPERATOR RESPONSE: In their response letter to Inspection Number DJ19-008, dated June 25, 2019, Tri-County Natural Gas stated that:

> "Tri-County has operating records to substantiate the MAOP of its feeder line, as well at the remainder of its facilities. Documentation is being sent to the Lead Inspector by email in an effort to clear this Probable Violation."

SECOND FOLLOW-UP INSPECTION: On February 13, 2019, Staff conducted a Public Awareness Inspection (Ref: Inspection Number LB19-009). In this inspection, Staff stated that:

> "At the time of this inspection, Tri-County Natural Gas Department was under two existing probable violations discovered on December 17, 2018, under inspection number JS18-042. The Operator recently received this inspection report and did not have sufficient time to respond to the inspection report. Staff did not address these violations."

THIRD OPERATOR RESPONSE: In their response letter to Inspection Number LB19-009, dated July 2, 2019, Tri-County Natural Gas stated that:

> "Tri-County has operating records to substantiate the MAOP of its feeder line, as well at the remainder of its facilities. Documentation is being sent to the Lead Inspector by email in an effort to clear this Probable Violation."

THIRD FOLLOW-UP INSPECTION: On November 18, 2019 Staff reported to Tri-County Gas department to perform a Follow-up inspection of the Operator's previously existing probable violations. In this inspection Staff staed:

> "During this inspection (DJ19-060), Staff reviewed documentation provided by the Operator which shows that the Operator has calculated that the operating pressure of their feeder line is below 20% SMYS; however, this documentation does not demonstrate the maximum allowable operating pressures for this pipeline, or the other Tri-County pipeline, has been determined under §192.619."

FOURTH OPERATOR RESPONSE: In their response to Inspection Number DJ19-060, dated April 7, 2020, Tri-County Natural Gas stated:

> "Tri-County has taken additional steps to review and document the MAOP of its feeder line and other facilities in accordance with § 192.619. This documentation is available for review by Staff."

FOURTH FOLLOW-UP INSPECTION: 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. (Ref. Inspection Number JB22-001) In that inspection Staff stated:

> "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."

FIFTH OPERATOR RESPONSE: In their response to Inspection Number JB22-001, dated December 27, 2022, Tri-County Natural Gas stated:

> "Tri-County Natural Gas has reviewed and documented the MAOP of its feeder line and other facilities in accordance with 192.619. This documentation is available for review by Staff."

FIFTH FOLLOW-UP INSPECTION: On June 15th, 2022, Staff reported to Tri-County Gas Authority to perform an inspection of the Operator's methane emission reduction plan for compliance with the Congressional mandate of Section 114 of the Protecting Our Infrastructure of Pipelines and Enhancing Safety (PIPES) Act of 2020. (Ref. Inspection Number RS22-019) In that insipection Staff stated:

> "At the time of this inspection Tri-County Gas Authority had one (1) previous existing probable violation. This violation was not reviewed at the time of inspection."

SIXTH OPERATOR RESPONSE: In their response to Inspection Number RS22-019, dated April 2, 2021, the Operator stated:

> "Tri-County has taken additional steps to review and document the MAOP of its feeder line and other facilities in accordance with 192.619. This documentation is available for review by Staff."

SIXTH FOLLOW-UP INSPECTION: On January 31, 2024, Staff reported to Tri-County Natural Gas Authority to perform a follow-up Inspection Number RS24-008. In this inspection Staff stated:

> "During this inspection (RS24-008) Staff reviewed records provided by the Operator for the documentation of their MAOP's. Staff determined that the records provided were not sufficient to demonstrate an established MAOP for each of the Operator's pipeline segments."

OPERATOR RESPONSE: In their response letter to Inspection Number RS24-008, that was filed with the Commission on March 24, 2025, Tri-County Natural Gas stated:

> "During the follow-up inspection #RS24-008, proof of 10-years of operating history plus the MAOP verification and records review form T-1 was provided for the feeder line in question. This information has typically sufficed for clearing violations relating to MAOP validation. Tri-County Natural Gas Authority is requesting an informal conference in order to determine what remaining records Staff is requesting to clear this continuing violation."

SEVENTH FOLLOW-UP INSPECTION: During this inspection Tri-County Natural Gas Authority first clarified the various maximum allowable operating pressures. During the 2018 inspection Staff stated Tri-County systems consisted of 450, 100, 70, 60, 35 and 30 operating pressures. Today, the Operator's O&M section 1 'System Information' states Distribution Mains MAOPs are: 400, 125, 100, 70, 45, 35, 30, 25. (Staff Notes that a MAOP of 60 was not listed.)

The Operator provided Staff with worksheets which document how various segments throughout their system established the maximum allowable operating pressure (MAOP).

- Diamond Hill (Transco) 1964 – 6-inch, 4-inch & 2-inch steel lines: the 400 MAOP were established under §192.619(a)(4) maximum safe pressure based on history (OPP installed IAW §192.619(b).

- Louise Lane 1964 (reg. station) 1983 main 2-inch PE: the 30 MAOP was established under §192.619(a)(4) maximum safe pressure based on history (OPP installed IAW §192.619(b).

- Crawford #2 1981 – 2-inch PE: the 30 MAOP was established under §192.619(a)(4) maximum safe pressure based on history (OPP installed IAW §192.619(b).

- Lexington #1 1964 – 2 ½-inch, 2-inch, 1 ½-inch steel & 2-inch PE: (1990s) the 70 MAOP were established under §192.619(a)(4) maximum safe pressure based on history (OPP installed IAW §192.619(b).

- Lexington #2 1964 – 2-inch steel (between Lexington and Crawford) the 30 MAOP was established under §192.619(a)(4) maximum safe pressure based on history (OPP installed IAW §192.619(b).

- Brickhouse Rd 2001 – 4-inch PE: the 60 MAOP was established under §192.121(a) which is the design pressure for plastic pipe, §192.619(a)(1) which is the design pressure of the weakest element in the segment, in accordance with subparts C and D of this part, and §192.619(a)(2)(i) (the pressure is obtained by dividing the pressure to which the pipeline segment was tested after construction; by a factor of 1.5)

- Lake Oconee 2014 – 6-inch PE: the 60 MAOP was established under §192.121(a) which is the design pressure for plastic pipe, §192.619(a)(1) which is the design pressure of the weakest element in the segment, in accordance with subparts C and D of this part, and §192.619(a)(2)(i) (the pressure is obtained by dividing the pressure to which the pipeline segment was tested after construction; by a factor of 1.5)

Staff determined that this probable violation can be cleared at this time.

PROBABLE VIOLATION CONTINUING

In regard to the probable violation 49 CFR, §192.181(a) which was cited under Inspection Number JB22-001, in that inspection Staff stated that:

> "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."

FIRST OPERATOR RESPONSE: In their response letter dated December 13, 2022, the Operator stated:

> Tri-County Natural Gas has addressed valve placement in its Construction Manual.

FIRST FOLLOW-UP INSPECTION: On January 31, 2024, Staff reported to Tri-County Natural Gas Authority to perform a follow-up inspection (Ref. Inspection Number RS24-008). In this inspection Staff stated:

> "During this inspection (RS24-008), Staff reviewed the Operators response and the documents provided by the Operator (copy of Construction Manual page 18) and found that their amended procedure contains a list of considerations for the placement of valves, but is not a procedure which tells their employees when or where a valve must be place to ensure that they have complied with the requirements of §192.181(a), or to ensure that they can meet the requirements of §192.615(a)(6). Staff has reviewed the Operators response and the statement provided by the Operator and found that it did NOT adequately addresses this violation."

SECOND OPERATOR RESPONSE: In their response letter to Inspection Number RS24-008, that was filed with the Commission on March 24, 2025, the Operator stated:

> "Tri County Natural Gas Authority believes that the language contained in its construction manual meets the intent of §192.181 as this section of the regulations is related to Design and not Operations and Maintenance. Additionally, Advisory Bulletin ADB-94-02 recognizes that to specifically define the requirement for location and number of valves is "not feasible because the location and number of valves is dependent on local conditions, and because local conditions vary greatly from operator to operator and city to city." Tri-County Natural Gas Authority respectfully requests an informal conference to further discuss this issue."

SECOND FOLLOW-UP INSPECTION: On January 7 and 21, 2026, Staff reported to Tri-County Natural Gas Authority to perform a follow-up inspection on the Operator's existing probable violations. During this inspection Tri-County Natural Gas Authority provided an updated version 'Distribution Line Valve (Ref. §192.181), (ADB-94-02)' procedure within their Construction Manual (dated: 01/12/2026).

The only real differences Staff sees between this current version and the previous one that was reviewed by Staff in 2024 under Inspection Number RS24-008 is the following:

- Current Version mentions: When determining valve location and spacing to meet the requirements of §192.181, the Tri-County Natural Gas Authority shall utilize the guide material developed by the Gas Piping Technology Committee (GPTC). As noted in Advisory Bulletin ADB-94-02, to specifically define the requirement for location and number of emergency valves is not feasible because the location and number of valves is dependent on local conditions, and because local conditions vary greatly.

- Current Version mentions: under section vi. Each system design shall include a Valve Location Justification Record (VLJR) documenting consideration of all factors in Item (ii). Records shall be retained as required under 49 CFR Part 192 and will be retained in Appendix E of this plan.

- Appendix E 'Valve Location Justification Record (VLJR)' is a form that is to be used only for new valve installations, relocations, or system modifications that require design evaluation under §192.181. The intent is to record the basic reasoning and field considerations used when placing a new or relocated valve – as referenced in PHMSA Advisory Bulletin ADB-94-02.

Staff reviewed this updated procedure with the Facilities Protection Supervisor, and determined that the Operator's Construction Manual, section C "Distribution Line Valves (Ref. §192.181), (ADB-94-02)" is guidance criteria. However, while this information is useful for developing a valve placement procedure, it lacks any specificity which would make it a suitable procedure for the placement of valves. Staff also found that the Valve Location Justification Record form in Appendix E contains a list of the same considerations, however, it does not say what the considerations are. For example:

- When would a different pipe size or material require a valve to be installed?
- What are the specific areas served (paving business, etc.) that Tri-County wants valves installed?
- Are there any specific barriers (rivers, highways, railroads) in the Tri-County gas system area of operation where valves need to be placed?
- How many customers, and in what time frame is Tri-County prepared to restore service to after a section of main is shut down for an emergency?
- What are the areas with operating pressures or feeds where valves are required?
- Or, in consideration of the original NTSB recommendation, given the number of employees available during normal work hours VS after hours emergency calls, what is the desired response time for Tri-County personnel to isolate a section of main?
- Or, in consideration of the original NTSB recommendation, when considering the number of employees available during normal work hours VS after hours emergency calls, what is the number of valves that Tri-County wants there employees to have to operate to shut down a section of main in the desired time frame?

Staff determined that the Tri-County Natural Gas Authority has not developed a suitable process on how to determine where distribution line valves are to be placed in their system.

Staff determined that this probable violation could not be cleared at this time.

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:	)	
	)	
Tri – County Natural Gas Authority	)	**DOCKET NO. 37093**
	)	
	)	
	)	

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, hereby certify that I have this day served a copy of the within and foregoing document on the following persons via email and/or United States Mail as follows:

*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 3rd day of August 2026:

Cathy Nesbitt

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