



Statement for the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency

Preparedness Committee

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OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE COMMISSIONER

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Training Program Administrator

Good Morning Chairman Barrar, Chairman Sainato and members of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committees, my name is Gerald Bimle, the Alternative Energy Emergency Response Training Program Administrator at the Pennsylvania State Fire Academy.

The "Alternative Energy Emergency Response Training Program" (AEER) at the Pennsylvania State Fire Academy (PSFA) offers multiple training programs specific to flammable gas and liquid pipeline emergencies. This includes the hazardous natural gas liquids such as pentane, butane and hexane now increasingly seen with natural gas production in Pennsylvania. These programs are available anywhere in Pennsylvania at no cost to all first responders including fire, rescue, haz mat, EMS and police. Also included are pipeline operators, public utility personnel, local, state and federal response and enforcement agencies. These programs are based on curriculum developed by the National Association of State Fire Marshalls in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Transportation. The curriculum used across the nation was written by Gregory Noll, a PA fire instructor and Michael S. Hildebrand. The Fire Academy Instructors that deliver these courses were originally trained by program author Greg Noll at the Fire Academy in Lewistown in 2013 and 2014. Through continuing education and program updates instructors receive the most current information to offer responders. There are currently over 30 instructors from across Pennsylvania qualified to teach these courses. These training opportunities have been recently updated and re-focused through a joint effort between the Fire Academy and pipeline operators in PA known as the Pipeline Emergency Response Initiative (PERI). The PERI is the result of the US Department of Transportation Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Administration's efforts to enhance training for all stakeholders involved in pipeline incidents.

A review of the training available includes a 2-hour basic "Pipeline Emergencies Awareness 101" training class offering first responders, pipeline operators, partnering agencies as well as citizens an opportunity

to attend and learn the basics of pipeline operation, safety and emergency response. This introductory training also encourages and affords interaction among all groups of attendees.

A more extensive 4-hour "Pipeline Emergencies Awareness Training" class introduces students to the design and operations of pipeline systems along with primary causes of pipeline incidents. Defensive emergency response procedures are discussed among responders and stakeholders. This 4-hour course can be delivered in an evening session during the week, or in half a day on a weekend. A full 8-hour training class, "Pipeline Emergencies Operations Training", is offered that includes not only the 4-hour class curriculum, but also some of the more responsive tactics that can be used to control the incident. This training includes exercises that have been developed from lessons learned at actual pipeline incidents, so students can learn through simulated pipeline emergencies.

The PSFA AEER program has also sponsored "Pipeline Security for Rural Communities" training at two locations. This is an 8-hour class that discusses pipeline security threats and mitigation strategies. This class is offered to first responders, gas and oil pipeline industry employees, security contractors, and elected officials at no cost. The class is provided at no cost by the Rural Domestic Preparedness Consortium established by the Department of Homeland Security.

The most comprehensive hands on pipeline training the Fire Academy offers is a 3-day "Flammable Gas and Liquid Firefighting" course at the PSFA facility in Lewistown. This training opportunity allows students to participate in numerous outside exercises including live-fire training utilizing both flammable gases and flammable liquids. This training is also free to municipal firefighters and all responders from local, state and federal agencies in Pennsylvania.

To date, over 500 first responders have been trained through the various PFSA pipeline emergency response training opportunities which are available. The PSFA has recently delivered 2 pilot editions of the basic 101 pipeline to 55 students via task force and fire department sessions. The PSFA has delivered 10 of the 4-hour classes to 220 students across 6 counties. PFSA has delivered 12 of the 8-hour classes to 321 students across 9 counties. Additionally, local level responders and emergency agencies routinely train and work together in preparation for pipeline related incidents. counties.

Finally, the PSFA under the authority of the Office of State Fire Commissioner, offers the Act 13 of 2012 Unconventional Gas Well Fund (UGWF) Grant Program. The UGWF Grant Program provides training, certification, and equipment grants to eligible applicants to improve and enhance the capabilities of emergency services throughout the counties where unconventional gas well drilling, and production is occurring, and those counties that directly border these counties. Most of these counties have some level of pipeline presence requiring additional training and equipment available through this grant program. The Act 13 UGWF Grant application is available online for 60 days beginning in May and closing in July each year for 2019, the grant period opened May 20, 2019, and closes July 24, 2019. Forty counties are currently eligible to apply (see attachment).

Thank you for providing the OSFC and PFSA an opportunity to discuss some of the pipeline safety training programs that are offered to the first responder community. We appreciate your continued support of the fire services. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.