Pipeline Safety:
Reviewing the Status of Mandates & Examining Additional Safety Needs

Statement of

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Good morning, Chairman Lipinski, Ranking Member Crawford and distinguished members of the subcommittee. I am Dan Eggleston, President and Chairman of the Board of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), and fire chief of the Albemarle County, Virginia, Department of Fire Rescue. I appreciate the opportunity to testify at today's hearing on pipeline safety: the review of existing mandates and the examination of additional safety needs.

The IAFC represents the leadership of over 1.1 million firefighters and emergency responders. IAFC members are the world's leading experts in firefighting, emergency medical services, terrorism response, hazardous materials (hazmat) incidents, wildland fire suppression, natural disasters, search and rescue, and public-safety policy. Since 1873, the IAFC has provided a forum for its members to exchange ideas, develop best practices, participate in executive training and discover diverse products and services available to first responders.

The Fire and Emergency Service Community

America's fire and emergency services are the only organized group of American citizens that is locally-situated, staffed, trained, and equipped to respond to all types of emergencies. There are approximately 1.1 million men and women in the fire and emergency service – approximately 300,000 career firefighters and 800,000 volunteer firefighters – serving in over 30,000 fire departments around the nation. They are trained to respond to all hazards ranging from earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes and floods to acts of terrorism, hazardous materials incidents, technical rescues, fires and medical emergencies.

The fire service protects America's critical infrastructure – the electrical grid, interstate highways, railroads, pipelines, petroleum and chemical facilities – and is, in fact, even considered part of the critical infrastructure. The fire service protects federal buildings, including military installations, and interstate commerce. No passenger airliner takes off from a runway or train leaves a station that is not protected by a fire department.

Pipeline Safety and Emergency Response

The United States transports approximately two-thirds of its domestic energy supplies in more than 2.7 million miles of pipelines. This system includes gathering pipelines that collect natural gas from wells and ship it to production areas; transmission pipelines that transport liquids across the nation; and distribution and service pipelines that transport hazardous materials from transmission lines to residential, commercial and industrial customers. Overall, the use of pipelines is one of the safest ways to transport hazardous materials across the nation.

However, accidents do occur, and local first responders need to be prepared and trained to respond. During a pipeline rupture or leak, the local fire department will be required to stabilize the situation; notify and evacuate the community (if necessary); extinguish any resulting fires; and prevent life and property loss. It is important that the pipeline

operators, local fire departments, and other appropriate state and local officials cooperate and quickly resolve the incident. This cooperation cannot start on the day of the incident. The public and private sectors must work together ahead of time to plan, train, exercise and equip themselves to respond to a potential incident.

Planning

It is important that all local authorities, including the local fire department leadership, work with regional pipeline operators to prepare for a rupture or leak. The pipeline operator must develop an emergency response plan that addresses the potential hazards that may occur and how to respond to these incidents in an effective manner. The local fire department will have to identify where pipelines are in their community and familiarize themselves with the possible risks of the hazardous materials carried by the pipelines. The fire department also will have to preplan how it will respond to an incident, including by working with emergency managers and local law enforcement about how to carry out an evacuation order; working with local hospitals and public health officials in case of a mass casualty incident; and local elected officials and the news media to ensure that the appropriate messaging is given to the public. A public-private partnership is critical to ensuring that a response goes smoothly in case of a pipeline incident.

Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPC) are designed to bring industry officials, local emergency responders, and other affected stakeholders together to plan and exercise for potential pipeline incidents. LEPCs were created as part of the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (P.L. 99-499) as part of a national framework to plan for chemical accidents. LEPCs are supposed to identify chemical hazards in their communities, develop emergency response plans, and maintain a community focus on chemical safety, risk reduction, and accident prevention.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), there are more than 3,000 known LEPCs around the nation.[1] Unfortunately, it is not clear how many of these LEPCs are active and carrying out their missions. When the EPA surveyed the LEPCs in 2008, it sent out 2,357 surveys and received 939 responses, an approximately 40% return rate.[2] One of the IAFC's missions is to work with community LEPCs and local pipeline operators to make sure that communities are prepared in case of a pipeline emergencies.

The IAFC is using a Community Safety-Emergency Planning Response and Outreach (CS-EPRO) grant from the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration's (PHMSA) to bolster LEPCs and help them prepare for incidents in their communities. The CS-EPRO grant is designed to prepare communities for hazardous materials incidents, including those involving pipelines, and focuses particularly on rural areas. The local fire department, local emergency planners and LEPC will play a leading role in this effort.

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[1] U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *2008 Nationwide Survey of Local Emergency Planning Committees*, 4.
[2] Ibid.

The CS-EPRO grant will help local first responders, emergency planners and LEPCs learn about the hazardous materials in their jurisdictions and communicate with industry to coordinate response plans. This will ultimately allow local leaders to better communicate information about these hazards to the public. The effort also will educate citizens living in rural communities about nearby pipelines, rail lines and facilities. In addition, it will help local citizens prepare to take action in the case of a pipeline incident, including what to do in case of an evacuation order. The IAFC intends to use these grants to develop best practices that other LEPCs can use to prepare their communities for pipeline and other hazardous materials incidents.

The IAFC also is working with the American Petroleum Institute (API) to update its recommended practice for Public Awareness Programs for Pipeline Operators (API Recommended Practice 1162). We have found that the pipeline industry, especially the operators of major transmission lines are proactive in conducting outreach to local communities to help them learn about the risks relating to their pipelines. Many companies will provide training for fire departments that have transmission pipelines in their jurisdictions. The IAFC recommends that fire chiefs reach out to the pipeline operators in their jurisdictions to identify local pipelines, learn about the risks involved with them, and utilize "train the trainer" and other educational programs that the pipeline operators provide.

Training/Exercises

Once pipeline response plans are developed, they cannot just be left on a shelf. The local pipeline operators, local fire departments, emergency planners, and other LEPC members must engage in regular exercises to prepare for a possible incident. Training and exercises identify weaknesses in plans and help communities revise them. More importantly, they bring the emergency response officials together ahead of time to coordinate operations before an actual incident. Pipeline response operations can be complicated and it is important that all of the participants have met before the day of the disaster.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, 60 percent of fire departments provide hazmat response, but have not formally trained their personnel for these operations.[3] The IAFC has developed the following resources to help fire departments train and respond to pipeline incidents:

- The Rural Guide for Rail and the Pipeline Incident Guide offer guidance on working with key players to create or revise emergency response plans for rail and pipeline emergencies.

- The Rail Emergency and Pipeline Incident Information Visor Cards provide a place to record important information during pipeline incidents.

[3] National Fire Protection Association, *Fourth Needs Assessment of The U.S. Fire Service*, viii.

The IAFC also worked with the National Association of State Fire Marshals to develop online training to help local fire departments familiarize themselves with the basics of pipeline emergency response. Online training is especially important for rural volunteer fire departments, which may not be able to send personnel to in-person training that is out of the region.

In addition, the IAFC is cooperating with TransCanada to help communities prepare for pipeline incidents. We have worked with jurisdictions to develop a pipeline annex to their emergency operations plans. This planning uses a whole community-approach to bring together the pipeline operators, first responders and other community leaders. In some cases, we have hosted town hall meetings to better inform the public about the location of a pipeline and the potential effects of an incident. After six months have passed, we return to the communities to conduct tabletop exercises that allow communities to test their plans and improve their preparedness for an actual incident. Overall, we have implemented this program in 16 communities since the program started in 2015.

Equipment

Fire departments need to make sure that they are equipped to handle a pipeline incident. However, they must make sure that they purchase equipment consistent with their emergency operations plan. In many jurisdictions, a fire department may be focused on mitigating the risk of a pipeline incident, like treating casualties or putting out resulting structure fires. They may be able to rely upon a regional hazmat response team, the pipeline operator's emergency response team or a neighboring metropolitan fire department to resolve the actual leak or rupture. The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant program provide matching grants for equipment, training and staffing to help local fire departments prepare for incidents like pipeline ruptures.

Conclusion

I thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing on pipeline safety. As the committee examines reauthorizing the pipeline safety programs at PHMSA, the IAFC recommends that the committee consider the following actions:

1) **Promote coordination between local authorities and pipeline operators.** Local coordination is key to preventing pipeline incidents and having successful responses in the cases of incidents. Local fire chiefs should work with the pipeline operators to identify where pipelines are and what risks they entail. The fire department should access both online and in-person training that is provided by the pipeline operator. LEPCs provide tools for bringing the whole community together to prepare for a pipeline or other hazmat incident. Unfortunately, we do not have a clear picture of how many LEPCs are functioning effectively or how many need help.

We ask that Congress appropriate funding for the Pipeline Safety Information Grants to Communities, so that they might serve as a useful tool for re-energizing LEPCs. The IAFC recommends removing the prohibition on non-profit groups, because a community non-profit group might be used to administer a LEPC and there are some volunteer fire departments across the country that are classified as non-profit organizations.

2) **Support training and exercise programs that bring stakeholders together.** It is important that the local officials and the pipeline operators do not meet for the first time at the incident scene. They must develop emergency response plans ahead of time and share information on how they will operate in an emergency. Also, local officials and pipeline operators must meet and exercise these plans on an annual basis. These plans are not just bureaucratic documents; they set out important lifesaving operations in a moment of crisis.

   PHMSA's Community Safety grants provide an incentive for public and private stakeholders to meet, develop emergency response plans and exercise them. The IAFC also supports both public and private efforts to develop online and in-person training for fire departments to prepare for pipeline incidents. We also ask that Congress appropriate funding for these programs in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020.

3) **Support funding for equipment and training for local fire departments.** Fire departments, especially in rural jurisdictions, may not have the equipment or training to respond to a complex incident like a pipeline rupture. Federal programs, like the AFG and SAFER program, provide matching grants to help local jurisdictions prepare for all hazards, including pipeline incidents. We appreciate Congress funding these programs at $350 million each in FY 2019, and ask that you increase funding for the programs to $405 million for each program in FY 2020.

The IAFC looks forward to working with the subcommittee as it reauthorizes PHMSA's pipeline safety programs. On behalf of America's fire chiefs, I thank you for hosting today's hearing and examining issues to ensure the safety of the nation's pipeline infrastructure. I look forward to answering any questions that you may have.