

**DIVISION OF UTILITY AND RAILROAD SAFETY**

The Division of Utility and Railroad Safety (“Division”) assists the Commission in administering three safety programs: Gas and Hazardous Liquid Pipeline Safety, Railroad Safety and Underground Utility Damage Prevention

**Pipeline Safety**

The Pipeline Safety Section helps ensure the safe operation of gas and hazardous liquid pipeline facilities through various types of inspections. These inspections include comprehensive reviews of required programs, procedures, and plans and field inspections of pipeline facilities, review of operator records, and the performance of risk-based field inspections of pipeline activities including construction and repairs. The Division also responds to and investigates reported pipeline Incidents<sup>1</sup> and Accidents<sup>2</sup> as reported to the Division's 24-hour, 365 day staffed on-call emergency number. The Division also investigates certain other pipeline emergencies that may be of significant impact to the Commonwealth but have not yet risen to reporting criteria at the time of discovery.

In 2023, the Division's pipeline safety activities encompassed the inspection of intrastate gas distribution and transmission pipelines, intrastate hazardous liquid pipelines, and certain interstate gas and liquid pipelines

The Virginia natural gas distribution network is comprised of seven private natural distribution gas companies and three municipal owned distribution systems which collectively operate a total of 22,500.2 miles of main piping and 19,897.9 miles of service pipelines. These 42,398.2 miles of natural gas distribution pipeline provide service to 1,338,854 Virginia customers based on 2022 federal reporting data (at the time of this report 2023 data is not yet submitted).

Pipeline safety activities also include inspections of intrastate transmission lines. These pipelines are operated by the seven private distribution companies, five intrastate gas transmission operators. These transmission pipeline companies operate over 507.5 miles of intrastate transmission pipelines in the Commonwealth. Additionally, there is one gathering line operator who operates 0.4 miles of Type B gathering line piping,<sup>3</sup> one liquefied natural gas plant, 36 master-metered distribution systems, and 12 propane companies who operate jurisdictional distribution systems (two of which also operate private natural gas distribution systems)

The Division acts as an interstate agent for the US Department of Transportation, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (“PHMSA”) and inspects four interstate hazardous liquid pipeline companies along with the inspection of Virginia's sole intrastate hazardous liquid company. These five hazardous liquid pipeline companies operate 1,143 miles of hazardous liquid pipelines in Virginia.

Since 2017, the Division has entered into a temporary agreement with PHMSA to inspect construction of the Mountain Valley Pipeline and Atlantic Coast Pipeline interstate gas transmission pipelines in response to §56-555.2 of the Code of Virginia. The Atlantic Coast Pipeline project was canceled during 2020. No inspection activity occurred for the Mountain Valley Pipeline in 2022 related to permitting issues, however, pipeline work resumed in 2023. The Division's temporary interstate agreement was renewed through 2024 for this project in anticipation of construction restarting. At the time of this report the project is approximately 99% complete and forecasted to be completed in the first quarter of 2024.

**Summary of Calendar Year 2023 Activities**

Gas safety inspection days conducted	82725
Interstate gas safety inspection days conducted	91.16
Hazardous liquid safety inspection days conducted	179.44
Number of probable violations found during 2023	546
Number of probable violations submitted to PHMSA	30
Number of compliance actions taken	72
Pipeline Incidents <sup>4</sup> or Accidents <sup>5</sup> investigated	3
Number of citizen complaints investigated	12

<sup>1</sup> Incident as defined by §191.3.

<sup>2</sup> Accident as defined by §195.50.

<sup>3</sup> 2022 reported mileage was 40.47 with four operators. A recently regulatory change added expanded classifications of gathering pipelines to Type A, B, C, and R. A number of operators were reclassified and/or became no jurisdictional due to incidental gathering definitions.

<sup>4</sup> Incident as defined by §191.3.

<sup>5</sup> Accident as defined by §195.50.

**Railroad Safety**

The Rail Safety Section of the Division in coordination with the Federal Railroad Administration (49 CFR Part 212 – State Safety Participation Regulations), helps ensure the safe operation of jurisdictional railroads and contractors by conducting inspections of tracks, signal systems (wayside and onboard locomotive), highway rail grade crossings, railroad operations, shipment of hazardous materials by rail, motive power and equipment and investigations of critical accidents and citizen complaints. The Division's inspections involve more than 4,100 miles of track, over 4,200 public and private highway rail-grade crossings, thousands of rolling stock, which also include tank cars, and intermodal containers and 69-yard facilities.

During the year of 2022, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) had multiple vacancies which were not filled. The SCC rail safety team played an integral part in the success of carrying out the FRA's mission. Inspectors assisted in multiple audits across all disciplines in and out of the state.

Summary of 2023 Inspection Activities

	Own <sup>6</sup>	Accompanied <sup>7</sup>
Number of Hazmat Units [1] Inspected	6,970	253
Number of Track Units [2] Inspected	7,059	689
Number of Locomotive and Car Units [3] Inspected	24,312	5,055
Number of Operating Practice Units [4] Inspected	839	57
Number of Signal/Grade Crossing [5] Units Inspected	1,143	369
Number of Defects Noted	6,602	1,173
Number of Violations Cited	62	6
Number of Accidents Investigated	40	
NRC Incidents Investigated	62	
Number of Complaints Investigated	60	

**Damage Prevention**

The Damage Prevention Section of the Division investigates all reports of “probable violations” of the Underground Utility Damage Prevention Act (“Act”) and on a monthly basis presents its findings and recommendations to an Advisory Committee appointed by the Commission in accordance with the Act. This Committee then makes enforcement recommendations to the Commission. The Division provides free training relative to the Act and safe digging practices to excavators, utilities and others, disseminates damage prevention educational material and promotes partnership among the stakeholders to further underground utility damage prevention in Virginia.

Summary of 2023 Activities

Underground Utility Damage Reports Investigated	1,462
Number of Individuals Having Received Damage Prevention Training	583
Number of Damage Prevention Educational Material Disseminated	57,639
Number of Damage Prevention Field Audits Conducted	949

<sup>1</sup> Each hazmat record review along with each visual inspection of a tank car, bulk/non-bulk package and/or freight container is considered a hazmat unit.

<sup>2</sup> Each mile of track, record, crossing at grade, among other things, is considered a track unit.

<sup>3</sup> Each locomotive, car, motive power equipment record, among other things, is considered a unit.

<sup>4</sup> Each location where operations are or may occur such as switchyards, field offices, yard offices, trains, yard crew locations and dispatching are considered an operating practice unit.

<sup>5</sup> Each signal/switch/grade crossing/PFC/ wayside and onboard locomotive signal system and record review along with each visual inspection of a signal/grade crossing component is considered a signal/grade crossing unit.

<sup>6</sup> Own means the primary inspector wrote the report themselves.

<sup>7</sup> Own means the primary inspector wrote the report themselves.