

Frequently Asked Questions

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What are you planning?

Pacific Gas and Electric Company's highest responsibility in 2011 and beyond is to enhance the safety of our operations. As part of this effort, we are planning hydrostatic pressure test work in your neighborhood. We do not expect this work to impact our ability to provide gas service in your area.

What kind of work will you be performing?

A hydrostatic pressure test involves pressurizing a pipe with water to reveal potential weaknesses. Hydrostatic testing is a proven method for verifying the capability of a natural gas pipeline to operate at a safe level of pressure (referred to as the maximum allowable operating pressure, or MAOP). Hydrostatic testing is also used to test such familiar items as scuba tanks, fire extinguishers and air compressor tanks.

What can I expect?

Visible evidence of the work may include:

- > Temporary traffic safety cones and/or detour signs
- > PG&E field teams
- > Testing equipment, such as above-ground pipes and valves
- > Machinery and support equipment, such as excavators and water tanks

In order to perform a hydrostatic test, the pipeline has to be taken out of service for several days. However, during the work we will provide gas to customers from an alternate source, so service will not be interrupted.

A few days prior to testing, some gas is vented from the pipeline. Depending on weather patterns, there may be a temporary gas odor. It is important to note that the odor and gas release will pose no risk to public health and safety. As part of our normal protocol, we notify the appropriate local agencies of this work. While gas odors are likely from the work being done nearby, safety is our top priority and we encourage any resident who has questions or concerns about the smell of gas to call us 24 hours a day at 1-800-743-5000 or call 9-1-1 immediately.

Frequently Asked Questions

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Is hydrostatic pressure testing safe?

Yes. Hydrostatic testing is a commonly accepted approach to test pipelines. If a pipeline were to fail during testing with water, you essentially have a large water leak. That's because water isn't compressible like air or gas; its energy when released dissipates quickly. Although a release of water could cause some flooding or even buckle a roadbed, PG&E will have plans in place and repair teams standing by. PG&E will also inform the local community before testing begins.

How do you dispose of the test water after the hydrostatic testing?

After the hydrostatic test is completed, the water used during the test is filtered of any contaminants while it is being drained from the pipeline. PG&E drains the water into large storage tanks and then performs a lab test on the water to determine the level of contamination. If the water is clean, which for the majority of hydrostatic tests it is, the tanks are emptied per the permits acquired prior to construction. Typically, that means properly disposing it by permit into a sewer pipe or into an open field. If the water is not clean, it will be disposed of at a properly permitted facility.

Is hydrostatic testing regulated?

Yes. Hydrostatic testing of newly installed natural gas pipelines has been required by federal law since 1970. The U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Material Safety Administration, acting through the Office of Pipeline Safety, administers the national regulatory program to assure safe transportation of natural gas. In addition, PG&E is regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission.

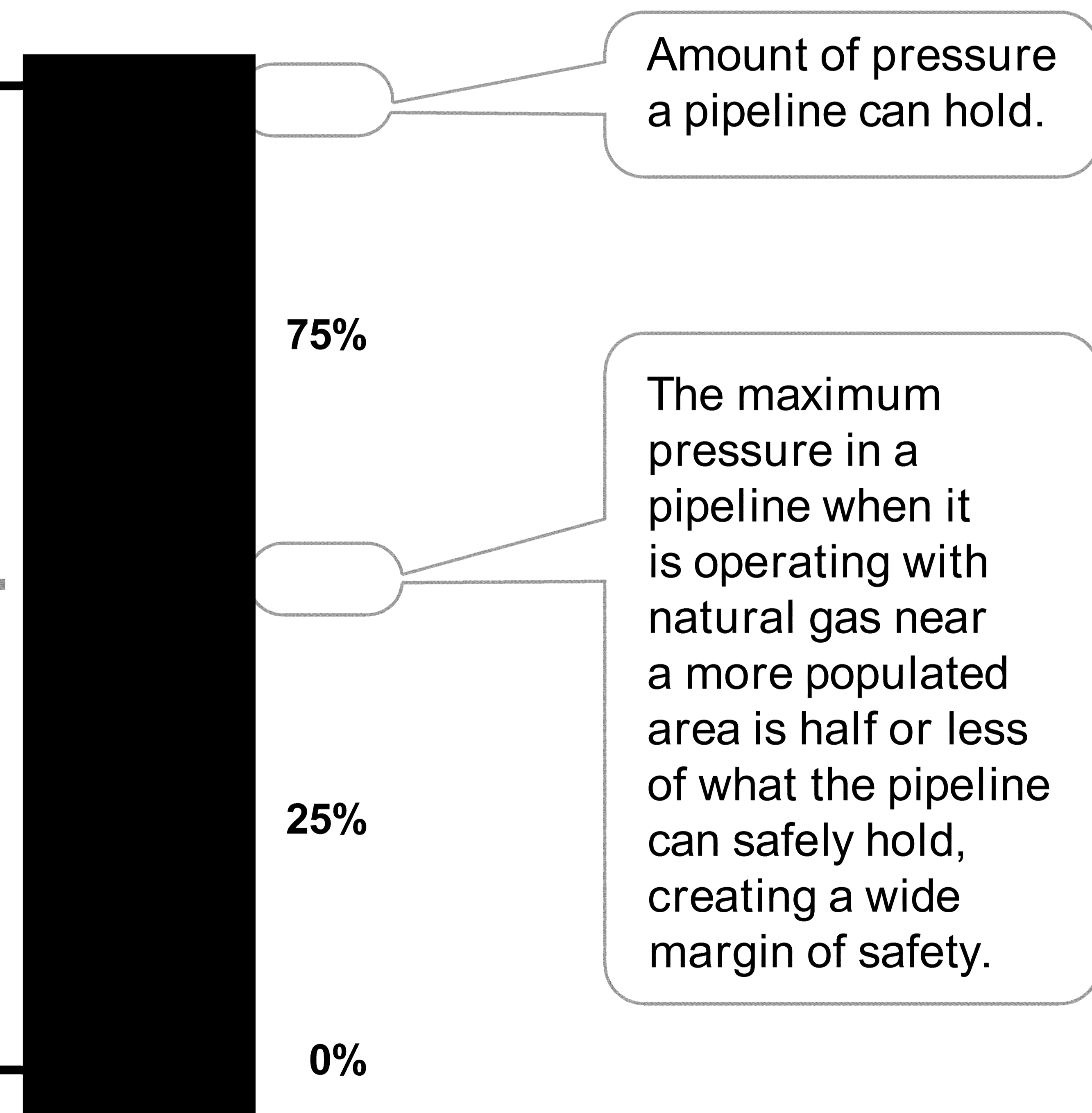
Who can I contact if I have questions or concerns during the work?

Questions about PG&E's field work and pipeline safety programs should be directed to our special gas project customer service representatives at 1-888-743-7431, between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m., Monday through Friday or call our PG&E Customer Care Call Center at 1-800-743-5000, 24 hours per day, 7 days a week.

Hydrostatic Pressure Testing

PG&E will be performing a hydrostatic pressure test on a segment of natural gas pipeline. This test involves pressurizing a section of pipe with water to a much higher level than the pipe will ever operate at with natural gas. This verifies the capability of a pipeline to safely operate and can also reveal weaknesses that could lead to defects and leaks.

MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE OPERATING PRESSURE



Hydrostatic Pressure Testing



Hydrostatic Pressure Test Steps

- 1 PG&E obtains all required work permits and coordinates activities with local agencies.
- 2 Gas is temporarily provided to customers from an alternate source during the work.
- 3 The section of pipeline to be tested is temporarily removed from service and safely vented of all natural gas.
- 4 The inside is mechanically cleaned prior to testing.
- 5 The section is sealed on both ends and filled completely with water.
- 6 The pipeline is pressurized to a specified pressure greater than normal operating pressure.
- 7 The test pressure is held and monitored for a set period of time, typically 8 hours.
- 8 If there is no significant loss of pressure, then the section of pipeline is emptied of water, dried thoroughly, and placed back into service.

If a section does not reach or hold the pressure, that means that the pressure from the hydrostatic test has caused the pipe to either leak or rupture. If that occurs, the leak is located, repaired, and the pipe section is tested again. Sections that don't pass the test are replaced.

Hydrostatic Pressure Testing

What you will see:



Temporary traffic safety cones and/or detour signs



PG&E field teams



Testing equipment, such as above ground pipes and valves



Machinery and support equipment, such as excavators and water tanks

Uninterrupted Gas Service

During hydrostatic pressure testing, we will provide gas to customers from an alternate source, so service will not be interrupted.

Alternate sources could include:

- Temporarily re-routing natural gas through alternate pipelines
- The use of safe, portable, temporary gas supplies such as compressed natural gas (CNG) or liquefied natural gas (LNG)



LIQUEFIED NATURAL GAS – LNG



COMPRESSED NATURAL GAS – CNG