



## Quality Assurance Audit of PG&E's Plastic Pipe Joining Program Northeast Gas Association Background

The Northeast Gas Association (NGA) is a regional trade association that focuses on education and training, technology research and development, operations, planning, and increasing public awareness of natural gas.

NGA represents natural gas distribution companies, transmission companies, liquefied natural gas importers, and associate member companies. These companies provide natural gas to over 10 million customers in eight states (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont). NGA was established on January 1, 2003. Its predecessor organizations were The New England Gas Association (founded in 1926) and the New York Gas Group (founded in 1973).

NGA is actively involved in the review and enhancement of pipeline safety standards at the federal and state levels. NGA works with other associations, like the American Gas Association and Southern Gas Association, to review and communicate gas safety standards to industry. NGA works with other associations and natural gas utilities to identify best practices in all areas of natural gas distribution operations.

NGA has been actively involved in the development of Operator Qualification (OQ) Programs for operators throughout the United States. NGA is currently developing an OQ Program for the natural gas utilities and contractors operating in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

NGA has a Plastic Pipe Joining Program (Program), founded in 1997, that was developed through a joint effort of personnel from LDCs, contractors and manufacturers with input from pipeline safety officials from several state public utility commissions. The NGA Program is based on the standards recommended by the Plastics Pipe Institute, Inc. (PPI), the major trade association representing all segments of the plastics piping industry. NGA has a Pipe Joining Committee comprised of representatives of 14 natural gas utilities, in addition to contractors and manufacturers, which meets regularly to update the NGA Program. The next meeting of the Committee is July 22, 2014 in Hartford.

To date, the NGA Program has qualified more than 26,000 individuals from natural gas utility companies and contractor firms operating in the following states: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and Virginia.

NGA uses independent contractors to conduct evaluations pursuant to the NGA Program. Each independent contractor brings to the NGA Program more than 25 years of field experience in the natural gas utility industry. They are qualified to instruct and evaluate all forms of plastic pipe joining and are trained and qualified annually by manufacturers of plastic pipe, plastic pipe joining equipment and mechanical fittings.