More than 164,000 miles of hazardous liquid pipelines and more than 295,000 miles of natural gas transmission pipelines move energy throughout the U.S. every day. County governments maintain a number of public facilities (including water and sewer systems, roads and transit) and make local land use and development decisions that can interact with existing pipeline infrastructure. As a result, county leaders can impact pipeline safety in their community by developing local ordinances that foster open communication and coordination among pipeline operators, developers and property owners.

All pipeline safety is regulated by the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA). In 2010, PHMSA formed the Pipelines and Informed Planning Alliance (PIPA), a group of more than 130 stakeholder groups and individuals made up of property developers/owners, local government officials, pipeline operators, real estate commissions and relevant national organizations, including NACo, to develop recommended practices on land use and development near transmission pipelines. Although local governments do not have the regulatory or enforcement authority to propose pipeline transmission safety standards, PIPA developed recommendations for how local governments can apply their land use and development authority to reduce pipeline safety risks to overall public health.

One of these recommended practices for local governments is the creation of consultation zones around transmission pipelines. This fact sheet answers frequently asked questions related to consultation zones.

**Q. WHAT IS A PIPELINE CONSULTATION ZONE, AND WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?**

**A:** A consultation zone is a local ordinance that requires communication and review among property developers, property owners and pipeline operators when new land uses and property developments are being planned within a designated distance of a pipeline. The main purpose for creating consultation zones is to avoid situations where public safety and access to pipeline facilities is not considered before a new project is approved and permits are issued.

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i “Pipeline Basics” U.S. DOT PHMSA. http://primis.phmsa.dot.gov/comm/PipelineBasics.htm?nocache=8396
Q: HOW DO CONSULTATION ZONES HELP TO ENSURE INCREASED PIPELINE SAFETY?
A: Defining pipeline consultation zones helps to facilitate early communication among stakeholders to better ensure consideration of the potential safety impacts of the proposed land use or property development on the existing pipeline infrastructure. Since local developers and planners are not pipeline experts, it is important for them to consult with pipeline operators to understand how a proposed development or land use will impact an existing transmission pipeline's integrity and the safety of the local community.

Q: WHAT IS THE RECOMMENDED DISTANCE FOR A CONSULTATION ZONE?
A: Typically, a consultation zone extends perpendicular from the centerline of a pipeline in each direction. PIPA recommends that local governments define consultation zone distances based on the site-specific characteristics of the pipeline and its surrounding area. Absent site-specific information, PIPA recommends that a standard consultation zone distance is:
- 660 feet on either side of the centerline of natural gas pipeline, or
- 660-1,000 feet on either side of the centerline of hazardous liquid pipelines.

Q: WHERE CAN I FIND A MODEL ORDINANCE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO USE AS A STARTING POINT FOR CREATING CONSULTATION ZONES?
A: Local jurisdictions with local planning authority can view a model ordinance for pipeline safety in Appendix B of the PIPA report, Partnering to Further Enhance Pipeline Safety in Communities Through Risk-Informed Land Use Planning, and you can read the report here: http://1.usa.gov/MFqfcj.

Q: WHERE CAN I FIND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES RELATED TO CONSULTATION ZONES AND OTHER PIPELINE SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS?
A: Visit these resources to learn more about:
- Understanding pipeline risks.
  - Read the PIPA report, Building Safe Communities: Pipeline Risk and its Application to Local Development Decisions. Read the report here: http://1.usa.gov/1fRunRt.
- Locating transmission pipelines in your area and obtaining pipeline operator contact information.
  - Use the National Pipeline Mapping System (NPMS). Access the mapping tool here: http://1.usa.gov/1eidfPU.
  - Local government officials can import the pipeline mapping information into their GIS or mapping systems by visiting here: http://1.usa.gov/1iRuTyV.
- Managing development near transmission pipelines.
  - Read the recommended land use practices for local governments from the PIPA report, Partnering to Further Enhance Pipeline Safety in Communities Through Risk-Informed Land Use Planning. Read the report here: http://1.usa.gov/MFqfcj.