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## Joseph L. Pfeifer, M.D.: Local physicians question candor of Kinder-Morgan

*Joseph L. Pfeifer, M.D.*

POSTED: 09/29/2015 03:27:31 PM EDT | UPDATED: ABOUT 18 HOURS AGO

**3 COMMENTS**

PITTSFIELD >> The Sept. 21 op-ed by Kimberly Watson (president of Kinder-Morgan's East Region Gas Pipelines) was an understandable, but disingenuous attempt to cast Kinder-Morgan and the Northeast Energy Direct (NED) pipeline project in a favorable light. She fails to provide actual data to support her assertions.

In spite of the efforts of Kinder-Morgan's open houses, TV ad underwritten by them and other outreach efforts, the total e-comments sent to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission as of the end of August numbered 5,411, 4,705 of them were opposed to the NED pipeline. Kinder Morgan's public relations offensive looks as if it is ineffective and its message viewed with skepticism in the affected communities.

The mantra of Kinder-Morgan, heard on radio, TV and in print is "we have safely provided gas to New England for 60 years." Since Kinder-Morgan was founded in 1997 by Richard Kinder, COO of Enron, it appears it is employing a form of revisionist history. Its contention, in reference to the Tennessee Gas Pipeline, which it acquired in 2012, is patently misleading.

In 2011, the U.S. Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (USPHMSA) cited Kinder-Morgan for these safety violations: failing to maintain update maps showing pipeline locations, failing to test pipeline safety devices, failing to maintain proper firefighting equipment, failing to inspect its pipelines as required, and failing to adequately monitor pipes' corrosion levels.

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Close examination of USPHMSA's incident reports for Kinder-Morgan's onshore gas transmission pipelines shows that faulty infrastructure caused 45 percent of onshore gas transmission pipeline significant leaks. Failure of the pipe, cracked welds, and faulty pipeline equipment together accounted for 28.3 percent of pipeline leaks, and corrosion of the pipe caused 16.8 percent. Throughout the U.S. since 2003, Kinder Morgan and its subsidiaries' pipelines have been responsible for at least 180 spills, evacuations, explosions, fires, and fatalities in 24 states.

USPHMSA found that pipelines installed since 2010 leak at a higher rate than pipelines installed before 1940. The majority of pipeline leaks detected from 2003 to 2013 came from pipes installed after 2010. Robert Hall, director of the NTSB's Office of Railroad, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Investigations, noted in a Sept. 1 interview that the rapid construction of pipelines in the U.S. is likely a contributing factor to these leaks. It is of interest that the decade of 2010 is when Kinder-Morgan became the largest pipeline operator and builder, with 84,000 miles of pipeline. According to its annual report, it spends \$0 on research and development.

**BLOWDOWN HAZARDS**



Declarations of adherence to environmental health and safety standards are also misleading. The NED will carry carcinogenic hydraulic fracturing chemicals, such as benzene, toluene and formaldehyde, along with methane. At the very least, these chemicals will gain access to the environment during compressor operations called blowdowns, which release large volumes of pipeline contents when lines are depressurized for maintenance and in emergencies. Published studies by Dr. David Carpenter, director of the Institute for Health and Environment of SUNY Albany, and colleagues, have shown that these chemicals are found in high concentrations in the air at distances as high as 355 m from compressor sites in a five-state study (Environmental Health 2014, 13:82). Compressors of 41,000 hp are to be located in Windsor and Northfield, and Nassau, N.Y.

During construction, blasting with high explosives will be employed to create the 6' trenches in which the pipeline will be buried. High explosives contain perchlorate, and blasting carries the risk of releasing of perchlorate into ground water through disruption of rock structure and aquifers. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, perchlorate is considered a "likely human carcinogen" and can affect the thyroid gland by inhibiting the uptake of iodine. A guidance value of 6 ppb has been suggested by Health Canada.

For the NED, blasting will occur in proximity to the water supplies of several communities. The presence of perchlorate in drinking water aquifers and its toxicological properties make perchlorate an emerging chemical of concern.

The pipes are subject to cathodic degradation and corrosion due to the strong electromagnetic field surrounding high-tension lines along which NED is proposed to run. An explosion from an undetected leak has the potential to disrupt the main electrical transmission trunk from New York to New England.

Kinder-Morgan also states there is insufficient gas to meet demand. Yet U.S. gas supplies are at maximum capacity and prices are at historic lows. The electricity price spike of last winter was a false alarm, caused by anticipation of a gas price increase which never materialized and was relieved by Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) tanker shipments.

In a March 23 Boston Globe article, Greg Cunningham, director of the clean energy program at the Conservation Law Foundation and Frank Katulak, chief executive of Distrigas, in Everett, stated that its facility could supply the entire demand in New England with LNG. Even Kinder-Morgan likes LNG tankers — it bought five convertible tanker ships for \$961 million in 2014. It has not disclosed whether these are intended for export use.

Since Kinder-Morgan appears to be welcoming closer scrutiny of NED, it might start by explaining to the public what chemicals exactly, and in what quantity, are to be carried in the pipeline besides methane gas. And, how does it propose to provide safe services with the troubling facts of hastily and poorly constructed infrastructure. These are critical issues for the health of all of us in Berkshire County.

Joseph L. Pfeifer, III, M.D. Pittsfield The writer is director of trauma and surgical critical care at Berkshire Medical Center. The Berkshire physicians listed below have asked that their names be appended in support of this document: Mark Pettus, M.D., director of Medical Education, Wellness & Population Health, Associate Dean of Education UMass Medical School at BMC, Parvis Sadighi, M.D., chairman of surgery, BMC, Marcella Bradway, M.D. vice chairman of surgery, BMC, Alan Kulberg, M.D., chairman of pediatrics, BMC, Charles Abbott, M.D., chairman of pathology, BMC, Alex Sabo, M.D., chairman of psychiatry, BMC, Herb Kantor, M.D., chairman of maternal-fetal health, BMC, Curtis Brasseur, D.O., chairman of radiology, BMC, Gray Ellrodt, M.D., chairman of medicine. Cassandra Service, M.D., Alec Kloman, M.D., Adam Rosen, M.D., Lisa Massie, M.D., Bonnie Wong, M.D., Bess Tortolani, M.D., Thomas Kwiatkowski, M.D., PhD, Marlyn Ramos-Lambooy, M.D., Gabriel Naventi, M.D., Stephen Kisiel, D.O., Thomas Dunzendorfer, M.D., Rodrigo Santamarina, M.D., Amanda Staples, D.O., Marvin McMillen, M.D., Henry Rose, M.D. Bruce Nayowith, M.D., Michael Moretelliti, M.D., Mary O'Malley, M.D., Mehernosh Khan, M.D., Gary Shalan, M.D., Valerie Nicoletti, M.D., Michael McHugh, M.D., Daisy Fischer, M.D., Christopher Clark, M.D., Brenda Butler, M.D., David Wilson, M.D., Xiaosong Li, M.D., Robin Kirby, M.D., Michael DiSiena, D.O., Jeffrey Leppo, M.D., Paula Aucoin, M.D., Eve Block, M.D., Christian Galvez-Padilla, M.D. Tim Baisch, M.D., Peter Fishman, M.D., Liliana Markovic, M.D., Andrew Beckwith, M.D., Jason Touhey, D.O., Mary Yee, M.D., Mark Nicoletti, M.D., Dennis Owens, M.D., Robert Sills, M.D., Robert Wespiser, M.D., Rebecca Caine, M.D., Robert Carter, M.D., Noel Blagg, M.D., Brian Hagan, M.D., Cahrles Wohl, M.D.

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