

PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

**Replacement of Older Plastic Pipe in
Natural Gas Distribution Systems**

Public Meeting held September 11, 2025
3050313-LAW
M-2024-3050313

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN STEPHEN M. DeFRANK

Before the Commission is a proposed Final Order that would resolve an initiative I began in August of 2024¹ to address the safety and reliability of Pennsylvania's natural gas distribution systems as it relates to older plastic pipe materials. Although federal agencies like the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) began warning the natural gas industry in the late 1990s of the vulnerability of plastic pipe installed between the 1960s and early 1980s to brittle-like cracking, a preliminary survey revealed that distribution systems in the Commonwealth still contain these materials. Through the comment process in this proceeding, it also became apparent that the identity and exact location of older plastic pipe materials in Pennsylvania's natural gas distribution systems are not always known. This is due in large part to disparities between modern recordkeeping practices and those that were in place when older plastic pipe was installed.

Today's action, if adopted, will initiate a process for all public utilities distributing natural gas to identify and catalog older plastic pipelines and components within their distribution systems or provide a plan for doing so. In the interim, public utilities distributing natural gas will be required to differentiate older plastic pipe from modern plastic pipe in their Distribution Integrity Management Plans (DIMP).

A DIMP is the written plan where utilities develop and implement their approach to ensuring the integrity of their gas distribution systems.² After current and potential threats are identified, utilities are required to evaluate and rank the risk of those threats.³ There may be instances where the location of other, aging pipe materials like cast iron or bare steel pose a greater risk than older plastic pipe based on a utility's assessment. Gas utilities know their systems best. However, the proposed outcome of this proceeding would be the impetus to bolster a utility's knowledge of its distribution system by

¹ *Replacement of Older Plastic Pipe in Natural Gas Distribution Systems*, Docket No. M-2024-3050313 (Motion of Chairman Stephen M. DeFrank adopted on August 1, 2024) (Tentative Order entered August 26, 2024).

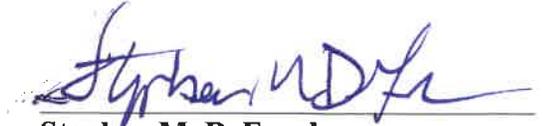
² 49 CFR § 192.1001.

³ 49 CFR § 192.1007.

identifying older plastic pipe and components so that a utility is capable of evaluating and ranking any associated risk.

I continue to encourage utilities to target older plastic pipe materials for removal and replacement for the concerns outlined by the NTSB and PHMSA. The replacement of older plastic pipe may prevent future natural gas incidents involving these materials.

Date: September 11, 2025

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stephen M. DeFrank", written over a horizontal line.

Stephen M. DeFrank
Chairman