



MNOPS Inspections

I've had a bunch of questions about inspection schedules from MNOPS for 2010. This week I asked MNOPS about their plans.

What I was told is that they intend to inspect all operators this year, and that the inspections will be similar in format to prior years. There may be additional "focused" inspections that drill down in specific operational areas in greater detail as well. These additional inspections would be in response to certain triggers, such as prior violations or incidents.

Also, it sounds like the 4 most recently hired MNOPS employees will be involved in these inspections. If this process works like it did last year, the new hires will be working with an experienced inspector to learn the system and become familiar with how to conduct effective inspections.

I asked that as these people are assigned that we work together to develop an inspection schedule. I want to be present at MNOPS inspections and helping to develop a schedule will hopefully avoid timing conflicts between different inspections. I will be in contact with each town to ensure we pick a date that works for you. My plan is to have this schedule complete by the end of April at the latest.

Program Review Details

The Gas Circuit Rider program review is set up to happen during the MNOPS Spring Conference.

This meeting will be held in the Viking room at Madden's Resort. The scheduled starting time is 5:15 PM on Thursday, April 15. Refreshments will be served. You should be out of the meeting in plenty of time for supper.

I hope to see as many of you as possible at the conference, and encourage you to attend the review. Your feedback is crucial to a successful program.

Contact information:
Jim Ramnes
MMUA Gas Circuit Rider
612-801-1768
Email me at jramnes@mmua.org

Code Corner

THE current hot issue in the regulatory community is gas lines that pass through sanitary sewer lines. On February 1, a sewer contractor cut a natural gas line that passed through a sewer lateral while trying to clear a clog. The sewer contractor was injured, and the house was destroyed.

There is a lot of ongoing discussion about this problem. The first question is how can repeats of this incident be avoided going forward, when the possibility of other cross bored installations exists? MNOPS issued an [advisory](#) recently that contained recommendations they believe will reduce the likelihood of incidents involving existing cross bores. Their suggestions included the homeowner or sewer contractor calling the gas utility to request information on the installation and/or having the sewer contractor call [GSOC](#) to request the gas line be located.

The second question is how can these "cross bored" installations be avoided in the future? Ideas include requiring camera inspection of every sewer lateral crossed by a gas line using trenchless technology, requiring cities to map and locate all sewer laterals, including "legacy" installations, and the use of microphones to detect sewer lines hit by bore heads.

From a pipeline operator's perspective, code already requires that we install mains "with enough clearance from any other underground structure to allow proper maintenance and **to protect against damage that might result from proximity to other structures**". 192.325(b)

Service lines "must be installed so as to minimize anticipated piping strain and external loading". 192.361(d)

No matter the outcome of this discussion, there is existing code language that prevents pipeline installation through a sewer line and the operator is responsible to ensure compliance.