

Frequently Asked Questions - Pipeline Right-of-Way Maintenance

Town of Flower Mound

Pipelines are among the safest and most efficient means of transporting natural gas and petroleum products, according to National Transportation Safety Board statistics. In the United States alone, there are over 300,000 miles of natural gas transmission pipelines in use every day. These transmission pipelines are larger than distribution lines, yet they are essential to delivering energy to your home.

How would you know where a pipeline is? Pipeline rights-of-way are clearly identified by pipeline markers along routes that identify the approximate location of the pipeline. Each pipeline marker contains information that identifies the company that operates the pipeline, the product transported, and a phone number that should be called in the event of an emergency. These markers are required by federal law and are referenced in the Town of Flower Mound's pipeline ordinance. As stated in these laws, no person shall tamper with, deface, damage or remove any pipeline marker, except the pipeline owner or operator. The U.S. Department of Transportation's Office of Pipeline Safety has developed the National Pipeline Mapping System (NPMS) to provide information about gas transmission and liquid transmission operators and their pipelines. The NPMS web site is searchable by zip code, or by county and state, and can display a county map that is printable. Please go to www.npms.phmsa.dot.gov/ for more information.

What is a right-of-way and why is it important? Pipeline companies work diligently to establish written agreements, or easements, with land owners that define the company's rights for the construction, operation and maintenance of pipelines that cross private property. Rights-of way are often recognizable as corridors that are clear of buildings, structures and trees. Usually, pipeline markers are located within a right-of-way but sometimes they are stolen, knocked down or hidden by growth within the right-of-way. Most rights-of-ways are shown on plats with local governments and County Clerk's offices also have records of easements which are public record. These easements remain binding on new property owners, even if property is sold or conveyed from the original landowner. Our easements are also on file with the County Clerk. If you have questions concerning your rights or Atmos' rights under the easement on your property, you may contact an attorney.

Why do you need to clear trees from the pipeline right-of-way?

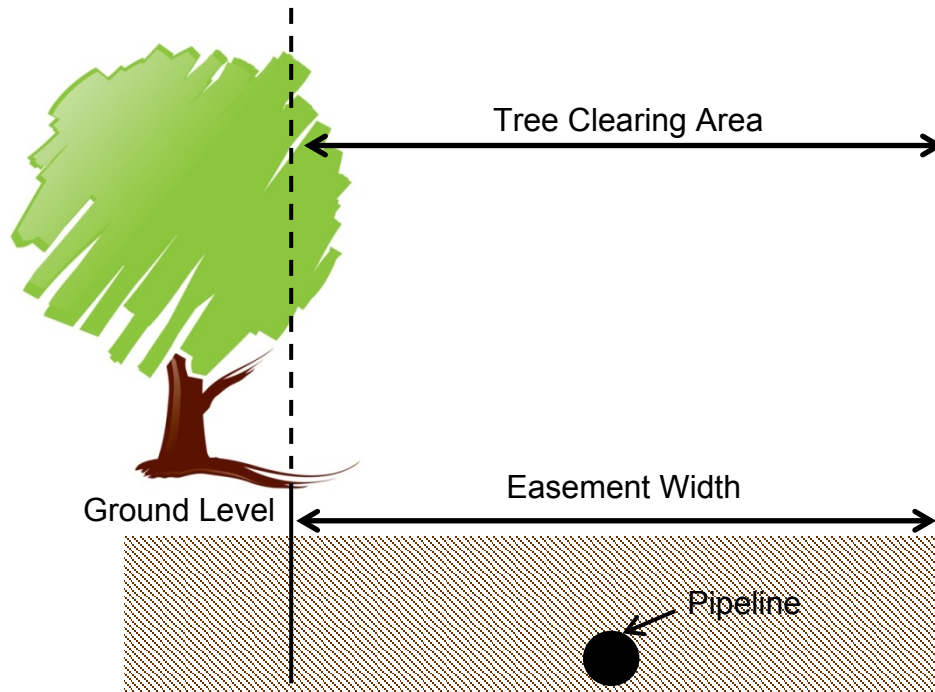
Over time, tree growth inhibits Atmos' ability to access the pipeline quickly in the event of an emergency, conduct required right-of-way surveillance and leak surveys, and perform routine maintenance in accordance with required federal/state inspections. In order to perform these critical activities, pipeline maintenance personnel must be able to easily and safely access the pipeline right-of-way, as well as areas on either side of the pipeline. Keeping trees, shrubs, buildings, fences, and other structures and encroachments well away from the pipelines promotes maintenance of pipeline integrity and safety. In addition, the root systems of many trees and large shrubs can grow against or around pipelines damaging the coating and even denting the pipeline. That type of underground damage can result in leaks and potential harm to the public. To avoid such damage, Atmos needs to remove trees from the right-of-way.



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How much will be cleared? For the areas of right-of way that our maintenance project will address, the recorded plats identify the location of the easements as well as specific provisions that permit this type of clearing. Generally, the width of the easement will be cleared. The width can vary depending on the terms of the easement document. Additionally, some trees outside of the right-of-way may require trimming of branches overhanging the right-of-way.



Has the Town of Flower Mound been notified of this work? Yes. Town of Flower Mound staff and elected officials have now been informed about the project. Atmos is working with Town staff regarding the scope of the project.

What will become of the tree refuse created by this maintenance? For manicured areas, such as paved hiking or walking trails, the refuse will be removed and offered to the Town of Flower Mound Parks Department unless a property owner desires the material for firewood. For forested and pasture areas, the refuse will be shredded and distributed on the right-of-way, unless otherwise requested by the property owner. Larger stumps may be transported to a landfill. Stumps are typically mechanically ground to be level with or just beneath the surrounding soil.

How long will this project take? Once the work begins at a specific location, it should be accomplished in approximately 2-3 weeks, but it may take longer in areas where work hours are limited.

Are there other issues about the pipeline right-of-way that I should be aware of? Keeping trees, shrubs, fences and buildings off of the right-of-way are essential for effective monitoring. Even temporary buildings can inhibit inspection of the pipeline.

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Who do I contact for more information? Please contact Atmos Energy's right-of-way representative, Evan Stevenson at 214.206.2939 Evan.Stevenson@atmosenergy.com or John Manganilla at 214.206.2938 John.Manganilla@atmosenergy.com.