

E&E Energywire

Fla. pipeline ruptures for second time this month

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A rupture on a natural gas transmission line yesterday near Palm Beach, Fla., was the second this month for Energy Transfer LP.

There were no injuries in yesterday's incident, but it shut down Florida's Turnpike in the area for most of the day. Businesses along the turnpike in the area were briefly evacuated, as was a nearby school.

The 18-inch-diameter pipeline runs along the turnpike in the area and belongs to Energy Transfer subsidiary Florida Gas Transmission (FGT).

The cause of the rupture is unknown, said Energy Transfer spokeswoman Vicki Granado. "However, there will be a thorough investigation into the matter," she said.

The section of pipeline was immediately shut down, and the gas was blown down in about 30 minutes, Granado said. She added that service to customers was not interrupted.



Aerial footage of a Sept. 10 natural gas pipeline explosion in central Florida. Seminole County Sheriff's Office

The previous rupture caused an explosion Sept. 10 near Sanford, Fla., between Orlando and Daytona Beach. It occurred on a 12-inch FGT line that serves a Duke Energy Corp. power plant and a Florida Public Utilities meter station. The 16-mile segment is part of a larger, 654-mile unit of FGT.

There were no injuries, but 20 people were evacuated and 125 customers temporarily lost gas service. The Transportation Department's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety

Administration (PHMSA) has ordered that the Sanford pipeline remain shut until the agency approves a plan to restart it at reduced pressure. Under PHMSA's corrective action **order** issued late last week, the company is required to further examine the pipeline for other potential problems.

The pipe that ruptured near Sanford was made in 1959 using a low-frequency electric resistance welded (ERW) pipe, which has long been known to have safety problems.

PHMSA and its predecessor agencies have been warning about that type of pipe since an explosion that killed five people in Whitharral, Texas, in 1976. In its order, PHMSA said the presence of ERW pipe heightens the risk of "imminent failures."

An inspection by the company in 2019 had found a "large amount" of corrosion indications on the Sanford segment, the PHMSA order said. It also noted that much of the land around the pipeline is in swampy areas, making the pipe "more susceptible to active corrosion."

There have been two similar ruptures on FGT pipes, one in Melbourne, Fla., in 2012 and another in Port St. John, Fla. But the ruptures were not at the welds.

About 30% of FGT's pipeline mileage in Florida was built in the 1950s.

Energy Transfer and its subsidiaries have had more than 300 leaks, spills and other accidents since 2012, but company officials say its safety record has been improving (***Energywire***, May 26).

EPA is investigating a May methane release from an FGT facility in northern Florida to see whether it violated the Clean Air Act (***Energywire***, Aug. 21).

In Louisiana, **records** show FGT had two ruptures on the same line within 16 months of each other in 2012 and 2013.