

## **FATAL ALERT**

### **November 11, 2006**

On November 11, 2006, a dozer operator on a right-of-way (ROW) crew of a pipeline construction company installing a new 42-inch natural gas pipeline struck an existing 36-inch, high-pressure natural gas pipeline, resulting in an explosion and fire. The dozer operator died as a result of the incident.

The crew was working in the surveyed and staked area for the ROW of the new pipeline. The operator/dozer involved in the incident, was following two other dozers who were scraping off the topsoil and subsoil in the ROW. He was "ripping the hump", or leveling the hills, and the dozer following him would build the ROW. The crew is responsible for scraping a foot of virgin soil and then creating a level, with the horizon, work surface within the staked ROW zone for the trenching crew to follow.

The pipeline construction company had placed the "one-calls", as required, for the existing lines to be located and marked.

The existing utility had outsourced the locating responsibility. The individual responsible for locating the line did not reference the engineered or "as built" drawings for the existing utility. The individual contracted to perform the line locates did not follow the written policies or procedures of the existing utility. No one was overseeing the line locator's work.

### **Significant Factors**

- The crew was working in the surveyed and staked area of the ROW for the new line
- The construction company had placed the required "one calls"
- The individual responsible for marking the existing lines did not refer to the "as built" drawings
- The existing line made a 20 degree change of direction that was not noted/marked properly

### **Recommendations**

- All employees should be briefed on the facts and circumstances of this fatal accident
- When working in a remote location, at least one crew-member must be current with first aid training
- When cell phones are depended on for emergency communications in a remote location, key personnel should be provided with a booster to improve the cell phone coverage
- Individuals tasked with the responsibility of locating existing utilities need to use the engineered "as built" drawings, a locator instrument, in conjunction with the alignment sheets and the best available technology
- Individuals tasked with locating existing facilities need to take readings at closer intervals and whenever lines cross or there is a path redirection, and clearer signage should be posted
- Utility companies need to ensure that individuals performing work on their behalf follow the companies written policies and procedures