



Advancing Natural Gas Operational Practices to Enhance Utility Safety and Sustainability

The American energy landscape is undergoing a profound change. Natural gas utilities are embracing innovation and cutting-edge technologies that help detect leaks earlier and minimize emissions, which align with the nationwide commitment to curbing emissions and pursuit of a clean energy future. In this era of transition, regulators must make decisions with a keen understanding of the nuances involved in energy distribution. Encouraging continued investment in natural gas technologies — including leak surveying, damage prevention, methane detection and leak grading and repair — can effectively bridge the gap between our current energy landscape and the more sustainable future we all seek.

Enhancing Leak Surveying—For decades, the resiliency of America's natural gas distribution pipeline infrastructure has helped support reliable energy delivery for millions of homes and businesses. The nation's natural gas distribution pipeline network continues to grow as the desire for reliable natural gas remains high. To meet this growing energy demand while keeping emissions low, utilities are constantly seeking to improve operational efficiency. Increasing the frequency of leak surveys, a proactive, systematic inspection process that curbs energy waste and mitigates potential accidents, is a critical part of this effort.

Modern technologies, including aerial and vehicle surveys, have aided these efforts. Federal regulators have recognized the value of enhancing leak surveying, with the 2020 Protecting Our Infrastructure of Pipelines and Enhancing Safety (PIPES) Act encouraging the prompt repair of leaks based on comprehensive analyses and prioritization. Early repair also prevents potentially larger challenges that directly affect underserved populations, who rely on the affordability and dependability of natural gas. As a cost-effective, reliable energy option, natural gas helps communities reduce their energy bills and allocate funds to other essential needs. Moving forward, future rulemakings should be similarly rooted in sound scientific analyses and consider the feasibility for all utilities — large and small.

Improving Gas Detection—As we look to the future and advance best practices for the continued safe use of natural gas, burgeoning methane detection technologies will play a pivotal role. Protecting consumer and public safety is an important responsibility for natural gas

utilities — and one that we take seriously. Laser detection devices have proven to be highly effective tools for detecting gas, and, over time, this technology helps reduce operating costs, which is especially important for cost-conscious gas utilities.

Zia Natural Gas is a natural gas utility embracing the latest technology to further bolster their leak detection programs. Zia Gas Company oversees pipeline in 4 counties in New Mexico - Colfax, Lea, Dona Ana, and Lincoln - providing natural gas service to over 36,000 customers. Streamlining the leak survey process, especially in rural areas, is crucial for protecting the safety of utility employees and the families they serve.

Encouraging Leak Grading and Repair—Though no federal regulatory requirements exist, gas utilities have been repairing infrastructure through leak grading for decades in alignment with industry best practices and state regulations. The recent surge in leak detection innovations is revolutionizing the way gas utilities manage their infrastructure, significantly enhancing their ability to grade and repair more promptly and efficiently. This leap in precision enables more efficient resource allocation, allowing utilities to focus on the most critical leaks first, which is crucial for ensuring system safety and reliability. Such prioritization protects communities while streamlining maintenance schedules and improving operational efficiency — ensuring that unnecessary expenditures are not relayed to customers.

Moreover, effective leak management plays a pivotal role in reducing methane emissions, ensuring public safety and maintaining the operational integrity of gas networks. With better leak detection and grading, utilities minimize the risks of accidents, which directly translates to safe and consistent energy delivery and continued customer satisfaction. This is why utilities continue to invest in innovative infrastructure reinforcements. Their infrastructure repair projects aim to keep pace with new standards while reducing methane emissions by an estimated 1,000 metric tons. The integration of advanced leak detection and grading technologies is not just a matter of operational efficiency for gas utilities, but a cornerstone of responsible and sustainable natural gas environmental stewardship.

Looking Ahead—We encourage customers to pay special attention to how regulations can impact natural gas utilities and consumers' energy costs. It is essential to recognize the role that investments in the safety of natural gas infrastructure play in ensuring energy reliability, which is why continuing to incentivize and leverage innovative technologies will foster a future where natural gas remains a safe, cost-effective, and efficient energy choice for communities nationwide.

Source: Adapted from www.realclearenergy.org Chris Latch is a Professional Engineer, Chairman of the American Public Gas Association's Board of Directors & Assistant General Manager for the City of Corinth Gas & Water Department.



Zia Natural Gas Company
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RECIPE

Classic Minestrone Soup

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 carrots, chopped
- 2 celery stalks, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 zucchini, chopped
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) diced tomatoes
- 1 can (15 ounces) cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- 1 cup small pasta (like ditalini or elbow macaroni)
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Freshly grated Parmesan cheese (optional)
- Fresh basil or parsley for garnish (optional)



Instructions:

1. Heat the olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the onion, carrots, and celery, and cook until softened, about 5 minutes.
2. Add the garlic and zucchini, and cook for another 2-3 minutes.
3. Stir in the diced tomatoes, cannellini beans, vegetable broth, pasta, oregano, and basil. Bring to a boil.
4. Reduce the heat and simmer for 15-20 minutes, or until the pasta and vegetables are tender.
5. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Serve hot, topped with freshly grated Parmesan cheese and garnished with fresh basil or parsley if desired.

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Upgrade your home with a smart thermostat from Zia Natural Gas for just \$100 and enjoy a \$50 rebate after installation. Go to our Save Energy & Money tab at zngc.com or call Crystal at 575-973-4093 for more info.



New Mexico's Natural Choice ... Zia Natural Gas Company proudly celebrating over 30 years of service and looking forward to many more!



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Community Calendar

Ruidoso

January 20th Winter coat drive Please join the RSVP program of Ruidoso Community Center to help neighbors in need stay warm this winter by donating new or gently used winter items for adults and children of all ages. Drop off locations are Capitan Library, Albertson's, Walgreens, Club Gas, Horton Gymnasium and the Ruidoso Community Center. We hope to collect lots of coats, hoodies, hats, jackets, pullovers and gloves!

February 5th Lincoln County Day in Santa Fe There will be a Chamber hosted reception with Legislators at 5:30 pm at Herve Wine Bar in Santa Fe. This is your opportunity to talk to our Legislators about any of your concerns. The reception is \$50 in advance or \$60 at the door. If you are interested in sponsoring a legislator or table or having an informational display, please contact the Chamber at 575-257-7395.

Las Cruces

January 18th Lasso Up Western Dinner, Fundraiser and Dance. Join the Girl Scouts of the Desert Southwest at the Las Cruces Convention Center from 6 pm to 10 pm, for an evening of dinner and dancing at their Lasso Up Fundraiser. This lively event supports a great cause and promises a fun night out! Tickets are \$75.

Hobbs

January 25th Job Fair at the Lea County Event Center from 9 am till 2 pm. Many industries will be here looking for the best and finest employees Hobbs has to offer.

Raton

January 26th Winter Lovin Craft Fair Come Join Bubble Hearts and Lil C's for an awesome Winter Lovin' Craft Fair in beautiful Raton NM!!! There will be over 30 vendors, food, and music!!! At Raton Convention Center 9:30 am to 2:30 pm.

Cimarron

January 23rd "Save Energy Save Money" at the Cimarron Senior Center, 449 E. 9th St. 12 pm to 1 pm. Join Zia Natural Gas to learn about Zia's Energy Efficiency Program rebates. Don't miss this opportunity to save money and make your home more energy efficient!

Reminder: We use this section for our local communities. The messages must be non-partisan and non-religious. Non-profit organizations messages will be given preference. Please send the information to csifuentes@zngc.com before the 10th of the month to make the following month edition. Thank you.

Lincoln County

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