

blowdown notification

At TransCanada, the safety of the public and our employees is a priority. TransCanada will soon perform some routine maintenance on our natural gas pipeline in your area. As part of this work, you may hear a particularly loud noise known as a “blowdown.”

A blowdown is the act of releasing natural gas from a section of pipeline so work can be done safely. TransCanada employees will close several valves to isolate that section of the pipeline and then open a special blowdown valve to release any natural gas.

The loud noise occurs when the natural gas, which is compressed into the pipe at very high pressure, escapes through the opening. The natural gas is compressed at 5,500 to 9,650 kiloPascals (800 to 1,400 pounds per square inch) and makes a loud roaring sound as it rushes out through the valve. The sound can be alarming if you are not familiar with what is happening.

As the natural gas rushes through the blowdown valve, a gas plume extends upward of 30 to 60 metres (100 to 200 feet). This gas release is similar to letting air out of a car tire: the most forceful rush of air occurs at the very beginning, then the flow gradually slows down. The first 30 to 60 minutes of the blowdown are the loudest, but the entire blowdown may last up to three hours.

After the natural gas is released, a funnel-shaped air expeller is placed on top of the blowdown valve opening. This machine is used to draw any remaining gas out of the pipe to make it absolutely safe for activities such as welding.

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TransCanada
In business to deliver

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Whenever possible, TransCanada will transport a piece of equipment, known as a “pull-down compressor,” to the site of a blowdown. This machine is attached to the blowdown valve and, instead of being released into the air, most of the natural gas is pumped into another section of the pipeline. The remaining gas is then released, but the loud sound occurs for a much shorter period.

Once maintenance on the pipeline is completed, workers begin the process of bringing the line back into service. The first step is to remove air from the pipeline. New gas is sent into the line until the pressure reaches about 200 kPa (30 psi), at which time the blowdown valve is opened again and air in the pipeline is purged. There can be some noise for a short time. Once sensors detect 100 per cent gas at the blowdown, the valve is closed. The line is then pressurized to its normal operating pressure.

Blowdowns of different types occur regularly along our pipeline. They are part of the safe maintenance and operation of our facilities. We recognize they can be an inconvenience for our neighbours and do everything we can to minimize the effects.

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact your local TransCanada representative.

Blowdown details:

Regulatory Comment

TransCanada facilities are regulated by the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (EUB) and the National Energy Board (NEB). The regulators work with TransCanada to ensure our pipelines are constructed, tested and operated safely. Both the EUB and NEB have employees available for inquiries and to assist or advise landowners and occupants regarding pipeline problems.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact us first.

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