

*FLORIDA  
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION*



*NATURAL GAS PIPELINE*

*ANNUAL  
SAFETY REPORT*

*2015*

*DIVISION OF ENGINEERING*



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# NATURAL GAS PIPELINE SAFETY

## Gas Safety Background

The federal government establishes minimum pipeline safety performance standards under the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, Title 49 “Transportation,” Parts 190, 191, 192, and 199. The Office of Pipeline Safety, within the U.S. Department of Transportation, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), has overall regulatory responsibility for hazardous liquid and gas pipelines in the United States. PHMSA’s goal is to improve industry performance and communications to prevent hazardous material transportation incidents, accidents, injuries, and fatalities. PHMSA tracks data on the frequency of failures, incidents, and accidents. PHMSA pipeline safety regulations assure safety in design, construction, inspection, testing, operation, and maintenance of pipeline facilities and in the siting, construction, operation, and maintenance of facilities. Additionally, PHMSA sets out parameters for administering the pipeline safety program.

The Florida Public Service Commission (FPSC or Commission) is certified through PHMSA to inspect intrastate transmission and distribution pipelines. Chapter 368, Florida Statutes, authorizes the FPSC to inspect pipelines and adopt rules for governing pipeline safety. The FPSC has adopted the federal standards as well as more stringent regulations found in Rule 25-12, Florida Administrative Code. PHMSA authorizes state agencies, such as the FPSC, to conduct oversight and enforcement of pipeline operators through PHMSA’s State Pipeline Safety Program<sup>1</sup>.

At the March 5, 1984 Internal Affairs the FPSC voted to require staff to prepare an annual summary report of the previous year’s natural gas pipeline safety activities. Any questions concerning this report should be directed to:

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Statutes provide for state assumption of all or part of the intrastate regulatory and enforcement responsibility of utility companies through annual certifications and agreements issued under this program.

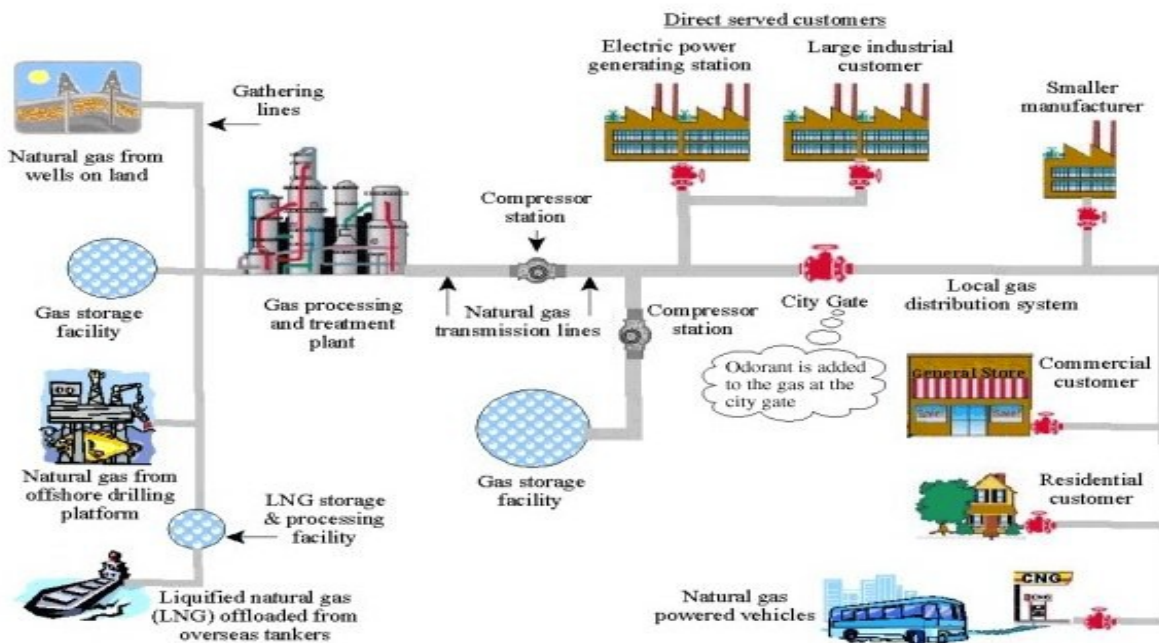
## Gas Safety 2015 Overview

The FPSC evaluates transmission and distribution pipeline and sub metered master meter locations to ensure that construction, repairs, and maintenance are performed in accordance with specific test procedures using proper materials.

The diagram of natural gas flow illustrated below provides a view of the various stages of the deliverance of natural gas from the wellhead to the consumer. Consumers vary from large industrial plants, such as electric generating stations, to the single-family household.

Florida is not a producer of natural gas at this time. Florida relies on gas delivered by high-pressure interstate pipelines from other states. The interstate transmission pipelines use compressor stations to maintain the appropriate pressure of the gas. The gas is distributed to large end users like power generation plants by lateral lines branching off the transmission lines. From the transmission lines, gas is delivered to city gate stations that reduce the pressure for the distribution systems. The pressure is further reduced by regulator stations located within the distribution systems. If a consumer's appliances require further reduction in gas pressure, a regulator is installed at the consumer's location.

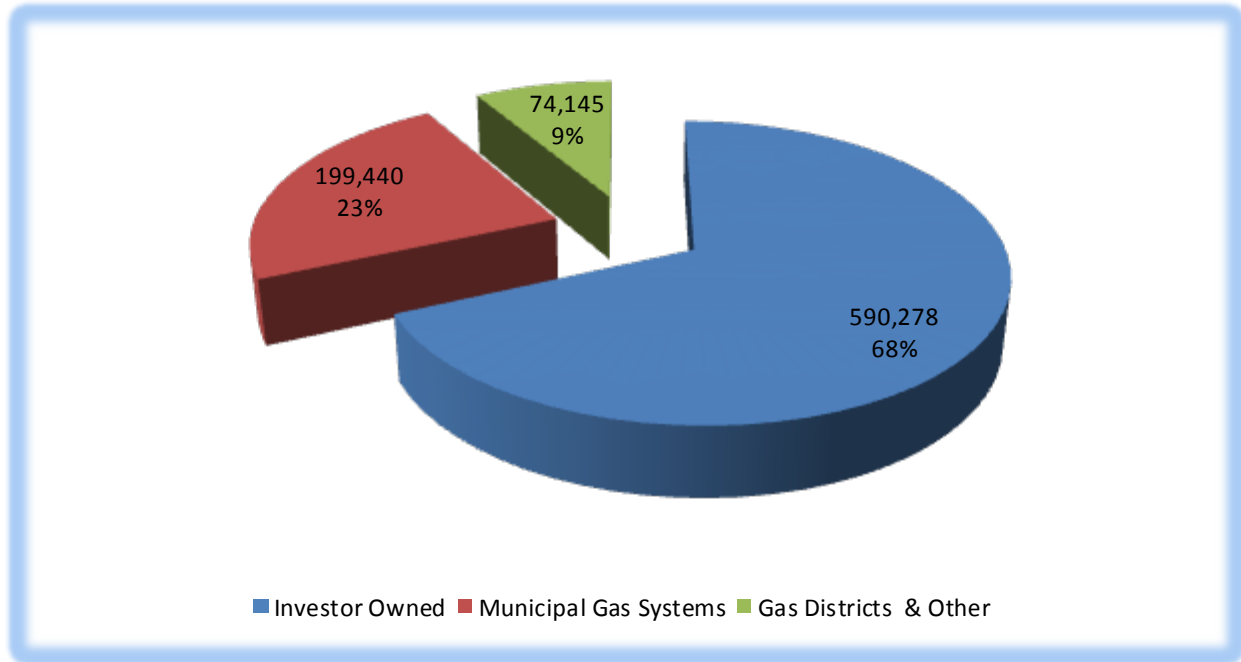
**Figure 1: Diagram of Natural Gas Flow**





There were 43 gas distribution companies and 17 transmission companies operating 99 systems in Florida as of December 31, 2015. Figure 2 below shows the total number of customers by utility type providing the service.

**Figure 2: Number of Customers by Utility Type**



A major aspect of compliance with state and federal regulations involves regular inspections of pipeline facilities. Safety, reliability, and service monitoring promotes an uninterrupted supply of natural gas service to the public and confirms that such services are provided in a reasonable and timely manner with minimal risks. Every gas system operating in Florida is evaluated by the FPSC on an annual basis to insure the operator is in compliance with both the federal standards and state rules.

### ***Gas Safety Inspector Duties and Training Requirements***

The FPSC safety staff has seven inspectors who conduct on-going inspections and review the safety operations of Florida's 99 natural gas systems. All FPSC inspectors must complete extensive training through PHMSA to be fully qualified to perform safety inspections. The following are the mandatory Safety Evaluation of Gas Pipeline and Systems courses:

- Safety Evaluation of Gas Pipeline Systems Course
- Gas Pressure Regulation & Overpressure Protection Course
- Plastic & Composite Materials Course
- Welding & Welding Inspection of Pipeline Materials Course
- Pipeline Failure Investigation Techniques Course
- Corrosion Control of Pipeline Systems Course
- Pipeline Safety Regulation Application & Compliance Procedures Course

# **Transmission Pipeline Integrity Management**

The Gas Transmission Integrity Management Plan was introduced by the Federal Pipeline Safety Improvement Act in 2002. This regulation required a pipeline operator to develop an Integrity Management Program for gas transmission pipelines located in areas where a leak or rupture could cause the most harm, such as high consequence areas. The rule applies to gas transmission operators jurisdictional to 49 CFR Part 192 and this rule became effective February 14, 2004. The objectives are to improve pipeline safety through:

- Accelerating the integrity assessment of pipelines in high consequence areas
- Improving integrity management systems within companies
- Improving the role in reviewing the adequacy of integrity programs and plans
- Providing increased public assurance in pipeline safety

An operator of a gas transmission pipeline is required to perform ongoing assessment of the pipeline's integrity. This is done by performing a risk analysis to identify and mathematically rank all threats that could be detrimental to the integrity of the pipeline. There are many key elements included in the written plan, some of which include identification of all high consequence areas, baseline assessment plan, and identification of threats to each covered segment. The rules governing the Gas Transmission Pipeline Integrity Management Plan can be found in 49 CFR, Part 192, Subpart O.

## **Distribution Integrity Management Plan**

As mentioned above, PHMSA implemented integrity management regulations that became law when Congress passed the Pipeline Safety Improvement Act in 2002 for hazardous liquid and gas transmission pipelines. Congress and other stakeholders expressed interest in understanding the nature of similarly focused requirements for gas distribution pipelines. Significant differences in system design and local conditions affecting distribution pipeline safety ruled out the possibility of applying the same tools and practices used for transmission pipeline systems. Therefore, PHMSA took a slightly different approach for distribution integrity management, following a joint effort involving PHMSA, the gas distribution industry, representatives of the public, and the National Association of Pipeline Safety Representatives to explore potential approaches.

The final rule establishing integrity management requirements for gas distribution pipeline systems was issued December 4, 2009 (74 FR 63906), with an effective date of February 12, 2010. Operators were given until August 2, 2011, to write and implement their program. The regulation requires operators, such as natural gas distribution companies to develop, write, and implement a Distribution Integrity Management Program with the following elements:

- Knowledge
- Identify Threats
- Evaluate and Rank Risks
- Identify and Implement Measures to Address Risks
- Measure Performance, Monitor Results, and Evaluate Effectiveness
- Periodically Evaluate and Improve Program
- Report Results

## Other Responsibilities

The FPSC Bureau of Safety also supports and assists the state's Emergency Operations Center in all energy related issues, such as energy security, natural gas incidents, and natural disasters or when any utility related threat is detected that threatens life and/or property. Several FPSC employees of the Division of Engineering are also members of the State Emergency Response Team.<sup>2</sup> Their assistance requires regular involvement supplying expert advice during an emergency; and coordinating activities of the gas and electric utilities, jointly with government, fire, police, and other public and private agencies. Training exercises and safety drills are held throughout the year to keep members current on existing and upcoming procedures relating to the operations of the Emergency Operations Center and to ensure preparedness should an emergency arise.

## Inspection Results

As each gas system is evaluated, the inspector prepares a summary of the findings and discusses the results with the system operator's supervisory employees. The information is forwarded to the Bureau of Safety office, where a letter is prepared and issued to an officer of the company. When violations are found, a non-compliance letter is issued to the operator. This letter details the issue(s) found and informs the operator of the date (usually 30 days) in which their response to the issue(s) is required. During 2015, there were 234 total violations with 64 percent attributed to PHMSA regulations and 36 percent to FPSC regulations.

During 2015, the average number of days between a violation notice being issued and the date the violation closed was 106 days. The number of days a violation had remained open has continued to decrease since 2010, indicating a more expedient response to correcting violations as they are found. Company response time from issuance of the violation notice to their response was 31 days during 2015. The companies are typically given 30 days to respond to a violation notice; however, the situation often varies due to the nature of the problem and difficulty in getting the violation corrected. There were 54 compliance actions during 2015. All violations have been corrected or are scheduled for corrective action pursuant to the FPSC's enforcement procedures. The violations that have been scheduled, but not corrected by the end of the year, occur late in the year and are carried over into the following year.

## Safety Improvement Actions

During 2015, staff evaluated gas operators for implementation of Public Awareness Plans (PAP). This type of inspection is in addition to the normal gas system inspections performed. PAPs are intended to keep stakeholders such as the public and emergency personnel informed about the pipelines in close proximity to their communities. Staff found that many of the gas operators, although a PAP was in place, did not take proper steps to implement the plans, or in some cases, did not evaluate the effectiveness of the procedures used to inform the stakeholders. Staff continues to work with the operators for corrective action. Consumer education information is also provided via the FPSC website at the consumer tip site. (<http://www.floridapsc.com/consumers/tips/>)

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<sup>2</sup> State Emergency Response Team provides updated information to other agencies and the public, during any emergency.

## **Natural Gas Bare Steel and Cast Iron Pipe Replacement**

Cast iron pipe is subject to graphitic softening or “graphitization” and bare steel is subject to corrosion. Both hazards can lead to structural failure and the release of gas. Gas utilities have been urged by the PHMSA to replace these older facilities as a safety measure. In August 2012, the FPSC approved cast iron/bare steel pipe replacement riders for three natural gas utilities, TECO Peoples Gas System, Florida Public Utilities, and the Florida Division of Chesapeake Utilities. Under the approved pipeline replacement program, these three utilities will replace 917 miles of cast iron and bare steel distribution pipe and 8,052 service lines within a 10-year period. As the result of several meetings with Pensacola Energy, in March 2011, Pensacola Energy voluntarily established a pipeline replacement program to replace its cast iron and bare steel pipelines. Table 1 below summarizes the progress of the four utilities. For 2016, the monthly bill impacts for a residential customer that uses 20 therms per month, is \$0.43 for Peoples Gas System customers, \$5.50 for Florida Public Utilities customers and \$1.71 for customers of the Florida Division of Chesapeake Utilities Corporation. As a result of these programs, 571 total miles of pipeline have been replaced.

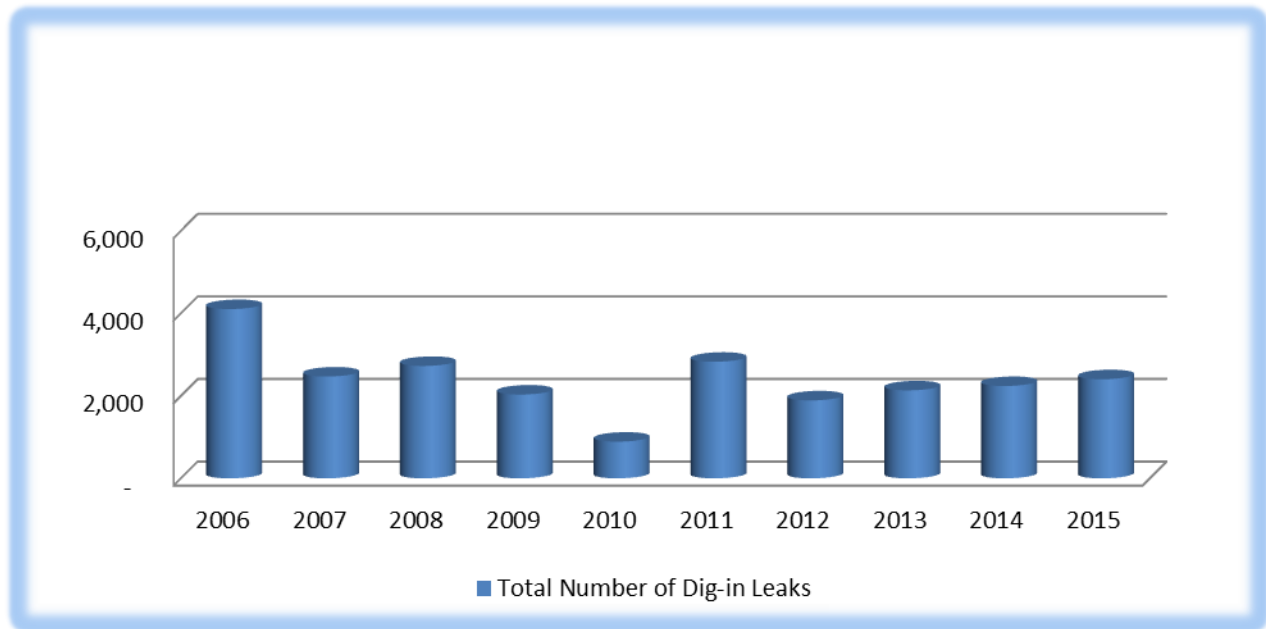
**Table 1: Pipeline Replacement Program**

Company Name	Total Miles of Bare Steel (BS) Pipe Needing Replacement as of September 2012	Total Miles of Cast Iron Pipe (CIP) Needing Replacement as of September 2012	Total Remaining BS Mileage (as of 12/31/15)	Total Remaining CIP Mileage (as of 12/31/15)	Total Mileage Replaced as of 12/31/15
Chesapeake Utilities	152	0	94.0	0.0	58.0
Pensacola Energy	469	88	333.0	84.0	140.0
Florida Public Utilities	197	1	97.0	0.0	101.0
TECO Peoples Gas	411	156	236.0	59.0	272.0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1229</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>760</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>571</b>

## ***Prevention of Damage to Gas Pipelines by Excavators***

One of the highest causes of damage to natural gas pipelines in Florida, and the number one cause in the entire United States, is dig-ins (pipelines cut or damaged by others engaged in excavation activities or directional drilling). Underground utilities can sustain damages from just a small nick of the outer lining of the buried facilities, causing leaks, water intrusion, or corrosion. Figure 3 below shows the number of natural gas leaks per year resulting from dig-ins.

**Figure 3: Number of Natural Gas Dig-Ins from 2006-2015**



Chapter 556, Florida Statutes, is the Underground Facility Damage Prevention and Safety Act that requires anyone that will be digging to call 811 first, so underground utility lines can be located and marked. Sunshine State One Call of Florida is Florida's one-call center whose responsibility is to help prevent damages to underground utilities. For the excavator, calling 811 helps prevent hefty fines and repair costs due to utility service outages, injuries, environmental contamination, and property damage. Violation penalties can range from \$500 to \$5,000.

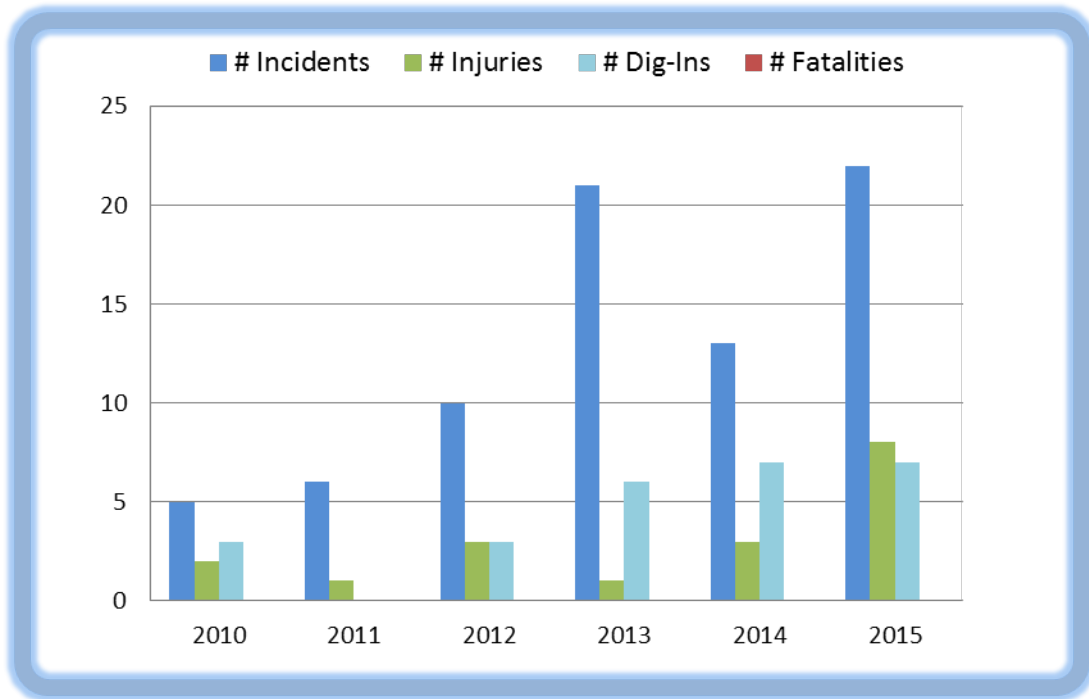
Sunshine State One Call of Florida is part of Common Ground Alliance. Common Ground Alliance is a member-driven association dedicated to ensuring public safety, environmental protection, and the integrity of services by promoting effective damage prevention practices. In recent years, the association has established itself as the leading organization in an effort to reduce damages to all underground facilities in North America through shared responsibility among all stakeholders. Other excavation damage prevention organizations can be found at <http://www.commongroundalliance.com>.

In the state of Florida, natural gas accidents and outages are reported to the FPSC in accordance with Commission Rule 25-12.084 F.A.C. The FPSC defines a significant incident as an event that:

- a) Caused a death or a personal injury requiring hospitalization.
- b) Required the taking of any segment of transmission pipeline out of service.
- c) Resulted in gas igniting.
- d) Caused an estimated damage to the property of the operator, or others, or both, of a total of \$10,000 or more.
- e) In the judgement of the operator, was significant even though it did not meet the criteria of subsection (a), (b), (c), or (d).

As shown in Figure 4 below, Florida had 23 incidents with 8 injuries and 0 fatalities in 2015. There has not been a natural gas related fatality in Florida since 2007.

**Figure 4: FPSC Significant Incidents 2010-2015**

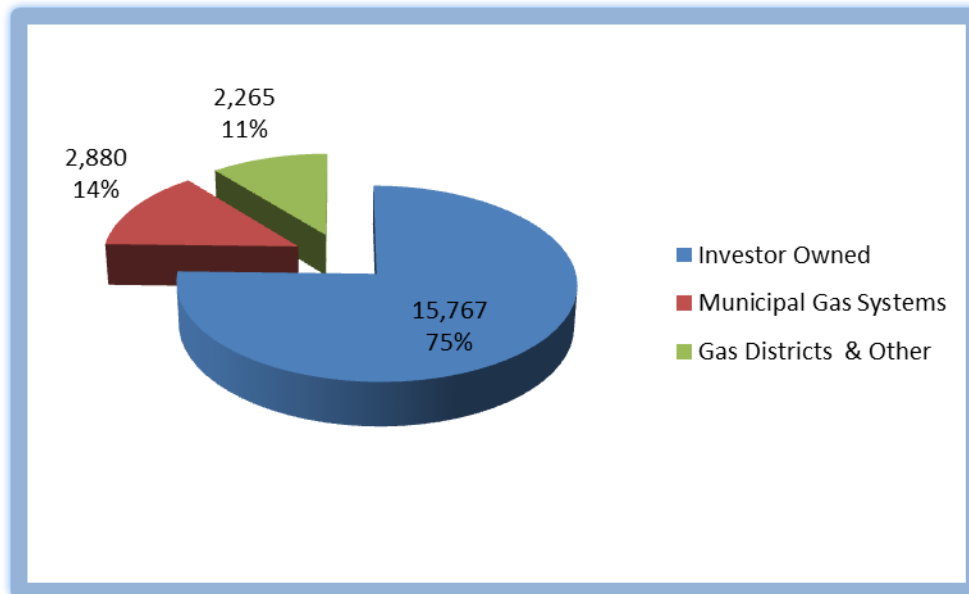


## Excess Flow Valves

An excess flow valve (EFV) is a safety device designed to automatically shut off the flow of natural gas through a piping service line if it ruptures, thereby mitigating the impact of the rupture. In general, EFVs are an added optional safety device that has no effect on the gas flow resulting from a small leak, such as a leak caused by corrosion or a small crack. EFVs do not prevent accidents; instead, they help mitigate the consequences of accidents where there has been a substantial or catastrophic line break. Where installed, EFVs are complementary to damage prevention programs, one-call systems, and other pipeline safety efforts that focus on preventing accidents caused by outside forces.

EFVs became a reportable item during calendar year 2011, however, operators had until 2012 to do an inventory and provide accurate numbers of EFVs placed during the calendar year and balance at the end of the year. Effective 2012, the FPSC began to closely monitor the installation of EFVs to insure proactive responses by the gas operators. Figure 5 below shows the number of EFV's each utility type installed during the year 2015.

**Figure 5: Excess Flow Valves Installed in 2015**



## Conclusion

Consumer safety remains the top priority of the FPSC gas safety program. Once again, there were no Florida fatalities caused by natural gas in 2015. The FPSC worked closely with the gas companies to continue to reduce the average closing time for correcting violations. The decrease was from 147 days in 2014 to 106 days in 2015. Decreasing the time it takes to correct violations increases the safety of Florida customers. The FPSC is continuing the replacement programs for bare steel and cast iron pipe and 571 miles of pipeline have been replaced since September 2012. Replacing these types of pipeline reduces the possibility of failures due to the age and outdated materials. Finally, the increased installation of EFVs will help mitigate the impact of any rupture on residential service lines.