

Petroleum pipeline ruptures in northern Iowa

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At about 5 a.m. on Wednesday morning, January 25, a Magellan Midstream Partners petroleum pipeline ruptured in northern Iowa, about 124 miles north of Des Moines, spewing an estimated 3,300 barrels (about 138,600 gallons) of diesel fuel onto farmland in Worth County, just over the Minnesota state line. Monitoring technicians at Magellan headquarters in Tulsa, Oklahoma noted a fall in pipeline pressure early that morning and shut down the 127-mile-long segment from Mason City to Rosemount, Minnesota.

The spill follows by one day the signing of an executive order by President Donald Trump to revive the Dakota Access Pipeline and the Keystone XL Pipeline projects.

By Thursday morning, journalists from Des Moines and Mason City observed some 70 persons on the spill site north and northeast of Harlontown, including Magellan representatives, officials from the EPA and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and cleanup crews. High winds and about a foot of fresh blowing snow hampered cleanup efforts, while truck crews with their hoses sucked the diesel fuel and snow into tanks for transport to a terminal in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The company also announced plans for excavating the contaminated soil from the 1 1/2 acres of grass and cultivated land to a landfill near Clear Lake, Iowa. No injuries have been reported.

News reporters from KTTC Television in Rochester, Minnesota and Mason City reported seeing officials testing water from nearby Willow Creek, a tributary to the Little Sioux River. Magellan had already declared that there was no environmental damage.

The Iowa DNR's Jeff Vansteenbergh told Wisconsin's National Public Radio, "It's a big one. It's significant. The product is under pressure, so as soon as a leak develops, it starts coming out pretty fast."

According to Wisconsin's NPR, Magellan filed a

safety plan with the US Department of Transportation in 2014, which reported that the company's pipelines traversed areas in Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota. Magellan moves multiple refined products in its systems, including diesel, gasoline, jet fuel, natural gas, naphtha, propane and butane.

The *Omaha World-Herald* reported that a Magellan pipeline carrying anhydrous ammonia ruptured near Decatur, Nebraska last October, killing one person and causing the evacuation of 23 homes. Last November, Magellan temporarily shut down its pipelines after an earthquake in Cushing, Oklahoma damaged several buildings. The company was also fined \$418,000 for a 45,000-gallon gasoline spill in Oklahoma in 2010.

The US DOT Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, prior to Trump's inauguration, employed 533 inspectors, or about one inspector for each 5,000 miles of pipeline.

Magellan Midstream Partners is a public corporation whose stock is traded on the NYSE. According to Wikipedia, the US State Department reports that the company owns "83 petroleum products terminals, more than 9,000 miles of refined products pipeline, 800 miles of crude oil pipeline and a 1,100-mile ammonia pipeline system." The current spill occurred days after a January 19 US Environmental Protection Agency announcement that Magellan had agreed to spend \$16 million on "injunction relief," meaning cleanup, and pay a \$2 million fine for 3 spills in Texas, Nebraska, and Kansas for violating the Clean Water Act.

The EPA declined to talk to *The Guardian* about the spill, and the Associated Press reported Wednesday that the EPA staff were barred by the Trump administration from talking with journalists.

According to multiple sources, Wednesday's northern Iowa diesel pipeline spill is the largest diesel spill in the United States since January 2010. The

Magellan line was built in the early 1950s, according to company spokesman Bruce Heine, who claimed that, given good inspections and maintenance, age should not be an issue for ruptures. The cause of the incident is still under company investigation. Heine also announced that the pipeline rupture would not disrupt company petroleum flows in the region.

On-site observers also reported that Magellan repair crews were cutting out the ruptured 15-inch-long segment on Thursday and welding in a replacement for the 12-inch diameter pipe. The incident is also said to represent the 6th largest refined petroleum spill reported to the US Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration in a decade.

According to the *Austin Daily Herald* in Austin, Minnesota, since 2010 there have been 807 petroleum spills in the US, causing \$342 million in estimated property damage while releasing about 3 million gallons of gasoline, diesel and other petroleum products into the environment. Magellan has a recorded 218 pipeline spill accidents causing some \$48 million in damages since 2006, spilling an estimated 832,000 gallons of petroleum products.

In the last 10 years, Magellan has had 40 enforcement cases lodged against it for pipeline violations, and \$1.4 million in penalties. According to the federal government, Iowa has had a total of 13 serious pipeline accidents, with one fatality and 16 injuries, between 1996 and 2015.

The *Des Moines Register* noted that Magellan paid a \$46,200 fine to the US government for a violation of the Clean Water Act in March, 2010 for a spill at its Milford, Iowa terminal, when the company spilled 5,000 gallons of oil into a nearby creek.

In 2001, a Koch Pipeline Company leak of 312,000 pounds of fertilizer near Algona, Iowa killed an estimated 1.3 million fish, turtles, frogs and other aquatic life, according to *Des Moines Register* archives.

On January 26, Eco Watch reported that a pipeline belonging to Tundra Energy Marketing LTD ruptured and spilled some 52,830 gallons of crude oil on the Ocean Man First Nation reserve in Saskatchewan, Canada. Ocean Man's Chief Connie Big Eagle told *Global News* of Canada and *Reuters* that a resident had smelled oil for a week, and found the spill January 20, when they informed the Saskatchewan government.

According to ProPublica, the 2.5 million miles of US pipelines "sustain hundreds of leaks and ruptures a year, costing lives and money," as the system ages. Since 1986, pipeline accidents have killed over 500 people, injured over 24,000 and cost almost \$7 billion in property damage.

NBC reported January 13 that a proposed North Dakota slate of state legislative bills would, if passed, criminalize pipeline protest movements, including prohibiting the wearing of masks, and exemptions of driver liability for injuring or even killing pedestrians obstructing traffic and roadways.

The bills were drafted without a whisper to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, whose reservation sits a half mile from the site of the proposed Dakota Access Pipeline. Dave Archambault II told NBC News, "The state claims they want to work closely with the tribe on repairing our relationship with them. Clearly that is not happening when legislation that impacts us is being drafted without consultation, consent or even basic communication."

The Dallas, Texas-based company, Energy Transfer Partners, in which President Trump holds tens of thousands of dollars of stock, is the Dakota Access Pipeline builder. North Dakota Republican Sen. John Hoeven, an avid lobbyist for the 1,172-mile pipeline, was named Chairman of the US Senate Committee on Indian Affairs last week.

Allison Renville, a pipeline protester and "water protector" activist, told NBC, "This is a scary time for Indian Country. To have such an avid supporter of the oil industry who has consistently stated his support for extractive industry projects on Native lands named to the position as chairman is akin to stepping on our sovereignty."



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