

# Emergency Preparedness



The secure operation of wells, pipelines and facilities is essential for public safety and environmental protection. The [BC Energy Regulator \(BCER\)](#) has jurisdiction over most pipelines within provincial boundaries, and many regulations and standards are designed specifically to safeguard operations, but companies are responsible for checking equipment, training employees, and reporting to the BCER at various stages of their operations.

## Why Emergency Preparedness?

Emergencies in the energy sector have the potential to cause damage to surrounding communities and the environment. Preventing incidents requires preparedness and continuous improvements at every stage of operations.

Operators must adhere to legislative regulations and BCER guidelines as well as industry standards, engineering codes and Canadian Standards. Many of these regulations and standards are designed specifically to safeguard operations and protect the public and the environment.



**Our mandate and mission statement detail our priorities - the [protection of public safety](#) and the [environment](#). Our proven tools include:**

### 1 Preparedness

Ensuring companies have a response contingency plan in place, including incident reporting requirements. These are reviewed annually to ensure information is current, accurate, meets regulatory requirements and reflects best practices.

### 2 Accountability

Requiring companies perform regular tests on equipment and operations, and continually **report to the BCER** before, during and upon completion of energy activities.

### 3 Transparency

Providing timely, factual information on pipeline incidents, published in the annual [Pipeline Performance Summary](#).

### 4 Remediation

Ensuring, in the event of a spill or release, a site is cleaned up and [remediated by the company](#), and all problems are fixed before operations resume.

### 5 Enforcement

Posting quarterly **enforcement summaries** and weekly **enforcement actions** on our [website](#).

### 6 Knowledge

Training and empowering our teams for **Emergency Management and Compliance and Enforcement** ensures companies are following all laws, regulations and permit conditions. Inspections are also triggered by public inquiries and incidents reported to the BCER.

### 7 Commitment

Committing to responding to all **safety-related complaints within one hour** and prioritizing site inspections following prompts including public inquiries and reported incidents.

### 8 Service 24/7

Maintaining our **Emergency Management Program (EMP)** which includes a 24/7 service to receive incident complaint calls. Upon receiving a call, our on-duty Emergency Officer confirms the severity of the incident or complaint and determines the appropriate level of response.

### 9 Responsiveness

Enacting our EMP if public safety is threatened or there is cause for environmental concern during an emergency. This includes opening our **Emergency Operations Centre** in Fort St. John. Consistent with provincial and local level emergency management protocol, our incident response staff are trained in the Incident Command System (ICS), allowing for ease of collaboration.

## What Happens In An Emergency?

- Whether due to a natural disaster, equipment problem, accidental or deliberate damage, we are well-equipped to respond and proactively engage with the community, operators, emergency teams and government officials.
- In partnership with other resource agencies, we provide helpful emergency preparedness information on our website for the energy operators we regulate, and their employees.
- We have a 24-hour emergency number for public and industry to report energy sector related incidents and concerns.
- Companies activate their Response Contingency Plan and a Joint Incident Reporting Line with the Ministry of [Emergency Management and Climate Readiness \(EMCR\)](#) is contacted. This ensures the correct organizations are notified, including the [BCER](#).



## We keep the public informed and work as an integral part of the emergency response team by:



- Receiving incident complaint reports
- Confirming the nature of the emergency
- Assessing potential risks
- Ensuring companies notify appropriate stakeholders
- Overseeing companies' response actions
- Liaising with and coordinating inter-agency emergency operations
- Providing regular situation updates
- Authorizing the official stand-down of the emergency response

Incidents are investigated, assessed and addressed with guidelines, regulations and standards updated as required.

## Do you suspect a leak? Natural gas is usually odourised to smell like rotten eggs or sulphur for good reason.

Once natural gas from the wellhead has been processed into a pure form, it is odourless, but a trace amount of mercaptan is added downstream (for home or commercial use) to create that distinctive rotten egg smell. **You can also detect a leak the following ways:**



- Sight.
- Vapour and/or ground frosting.
- Bubbles in wet or flooded areas.
- Distinct patches of dead vegetation.



### Suspect a leak **OUTDOORS?**

- Keep clear of the area
- Walk to a safe distance and call 911
- Do not start any motors or vehicles
- Do not use lighters or matches



- Dust blowing from a hole in the ground, and/or flames if the leak has ignited.
- A natural gas leak may sound like a hissing or roaring noise along the right-of-way of a pipeline.

### Suspect a leak **INDOORS?**

- Evacuate the premises - leaving the door OPEN.
- Walk to a safe distance and call 911.
- Do not use electrical outlets or items plugged in.
- Do not start any motors or vehicles.
- Do not use lighters or matches.



Pipelines and other underground utilities are found in both rural and urban areas. If you dig in the ground, there is risk of encountering buried gas or oil pipelines. **Always call BC 1 Call at 1-800-474-6886 (\*6886 on a cell phone) before you dig.**

**click or call before you dig.**