

Report: Improper Coating Likely Used on Pipeline



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Improper coatings were likely used on the Keystone Pipeline, according to a recent federal inspection that alleges the company in charge of the pipeline failed to provide suitable coatings at a number of places along the length of the project.

The Pipeline and Hazardous Material Safety Administration issued a notice of probable violation to pipeline owner TC Oil Operations, also known as TC Energy, in mid-June. In 2017, the Keystone Pipeline leaked in Amherst, North Dakota. (TC Energy was previously known as TransCanada.)

Previous Pipeline Issues

PHMSA said in a report in November 2017 that the Amherst rupture “may have been caused by mechanical damage to the pipeline and coating associated with a weight installed on the pipeline in 2008,” during the line’s original construction. The weight would have been placed there due to concerns about buoyancy potentially caused by groundwater.

As of last April, the company revealed that approximately 9,700 barrels of oil spilled on farmland in Marshall County on Nov. 16, 2017, considerably more than the 5,000 barrels the company originally estimated were lost.



TransCanada

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Preliminary reports indicated that the leak may have come as a result of damage to either the pipeline itself or its protective coating, caused during construction 10 years ago. The *Aberdeen News* noted that if the current estimate is correct, the spill is the seventh-largest in the U.S. since 2010.

Last July, officials confirmed at least one section of the pipeline north of Britton, South Dakota, was being dug up for inspection. Britton is just miles from Amherst.

According to *Aberdeen News*, the Keystone Pipeline runs 2,600 miles long, carrying crude oil from eastern Alberta, Canada, to Oklahoma, then to Illinois. The route also moves through northeastern South Dakota.

Notice of Probable Violation

Though no fine has been issued as a result of the probable violation, a compliance order was issued that requires the company to fix the coating material in order to prevent atmospheric corrosion. The company must also keep a record of where the piping had insufficient coating and when said coating was applied. TC Oil has six months to comply.

According to *Aberdeen News*, the “operator” used a fusion bonded epoxy on numerous spots on the pipeline “at and above the air soil interface.” In this, the company reportedly failed to follow its own protocol when it did not provide appropriate coating material.