



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

621 Woodland Square Loop S.E. • Lacey, Washington 98503

P.O. Box 47250 • Olympia, Washington 98504-7250

(360) 664-1160 • TTY 1-800-833-6384 or 711

*Sent via email*

June 2, 2025

Heidi Behrends Cerniwey  
City Manager  
City of Ellensburg  
501 N Anderson St.  
Ellensburg, WA, 98926

**RE: 2025 Natural Gas Public Awareness Inspection – City of Ellensburg – (Insp. No. 9001)**

Dear Ms. Behrends Cerniwey:

Staff from the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (staff) conducted a Public Awareness inspection of the City of Ellensburg (COE) from May 5, 2025, to May 6, 2025. This inspection included a plan, procedure, and records review.

Our inspection indicates two probable violations as noted in the enclosed report.

**Your response needed**

Please review the attached report and respond in writing by July 7, 2025. The response should include how and when you plan to bring the probable violations into full compliance.

**What happens after you respond to this letter?**

The attached report presents staff's decision on probable violations and does not constitute a finding of violation by the commission at this time.

After you respond in writing to this letter, there are several possible actions the commission, in its discretion, may take with respect to this matter. For example, the commission may:

- Issue an administrative penalty under [RCW 81.04.405](#); or
- Issue a complaint under [RCW 81.88.040](#), seeking monetary penalties, changes in the company's practices, or other relief authorized by law, and justified by the circumstances. Any pipeline company that violates any pipeline safety provision of any commission order, or any rule in this chapter including those rules adopted by reference, or chapter [81.88](#) RCW is subject to a civil penalty not to exceed \$272,926 for each violation for each day that the violation persists. The maximum civil penalty for a related series of violations is \$2,729,245; or

City of Ellensburg  
2025 Public Awareness Inspection, Insp. No. 9001  
June 2, 2025  
Page 2

- Consider the matter resolved without further commission action.

We have not yet decided whether to pursue a penalty or complaint in this matter. Should the commission decide to assess a penalty or initiate a complaint, your company will have an opportunity to respond and formally present its position.

If you have any questions or if we may be of any assistance, please contact Jason Hoxit at (360) 870-8406. Please refer to the subject matter described above in any future correspondence pertaining to this inspection.

Sincerely,

*/for/* Scott Rukke  
Director, Pipeline Safety

cc: Buddy Stanavich, Energy Services Director, COE  
Darren Larsen, Gas Operations Supervisor, COE  
Darin Yusi, Gas Engineer, COE

**UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**  
**2025 Natural Gas Pipeline Safety Inspection**  
**City of Ellensburg**

The following probable violations of Title 49 CFR Part 192 were noted as a result of the 2025 Public Awareness inspection of the City of Ellensburg (COE). The inspection included a random selection of records, operation and maintenance activities, and emergency response.

**PROBABLE VIOLATIONS**

1. **49 CFR § 192.616 Public awareness.**

(c) *The operator must follow the general program recommendations, including baseline and supplemental requirements of API RP 1162, unless the operator provides justification in its program or procedural manual as to why compliance with all or certain provisions of the recommended practice is not practicable and not necessary for safety.*

**Findings:**

COE did not send public awareness communications to the affected residents along the distribution system stakeholder audience in either 2021 or 2023. API RP 1162, Table 2-2.1, requires an annual message delivery frequency for affected residents along the local distribution system.

COE did not send public awareness communications to its LDC customer stakeholder audience twice annually for 2021-2024. API RP 1162, Table 2-2.1, requires a twice annually message delivery frequency for LDC customers.

2. **49 CFR § 192.616 Public awareness.**

(i) *The operator's program documentation and evaluation results must be available for periodic review by appropriate regulatory agencies.*

**Findings:**

COE did not maintain records showing that an annual audit or review of its public awareness program was completed in 2023. This is noted in both the 2024 third-party audit conducted by Q3 Integrated Solutions, LLC, and COE's Operations and Maintenance Manual, Section 14.19.3 - Third-Party Audit of Program, Page 23.