

Pennsylvania PUC Issues Final Order to Expedite Replacement of Aging Plastic in Natural Gas Systems

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On September 11, 2025, the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC), stressing the need to address aging infrastructure, approved a **final order** that will speed up the process of identifying and replacing older, at-risk plastic pipe materials in natural gas systems. The final order builds on the PUC's August 26, 2024, tentative order on the same subject. Under the order, natural gas utilities must catalog older materials identified by federal authorities as being prone to cracking and add mitigation and replacement of these older materials to their management plans. Beyond that, the PUC's Bureau of Technical Utility Services will require utilities to provide detailed inventories of older plastic pipes and components and explain how they will differentiate the older pipe from the newer pipe.

The PUC's action comes after several advisory bulletins, dating back to 1998, issued by the U.S. Department of Transportation on pre-1982 plastic pipe materials and a 2023 bipartisan bill introduced to Congress aimed at addressing older piping known to fail. The bill, **H.R. 5638**, or the Aldyl-A Hazard Reduction and Community Safety Act, was introduced in response to the deadly 2023 natural gas explosion at the R.M. Palmer Co. chocolate factory in West Reading, Pennsylvania. The National Transportation Safety Board, which released its **investigation report** in March 2025, confirmed that the point of failure was from a retired 1982 service tee made from DuPont Aldyl-A plastic.

The PUC emphasized that utilities that failed to respond to data requests on this issue in the past will be referred for enforcement action. Speaking on the final order in the PUC's **announcement**, PUC Chairman Stephen M. DeFrank said that "[s]afety is the foundation of our work as regulators and today's action underscores the Commission's commitment to addressing risks wherever they may be found—including in older plastic materials that have been linked to failures across the country." The PUC acknowledged competing priorities and the high cost of replacing infrastructure, but made clear that the enhanced replacement efforts were necessary to safeguard the public.

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