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**Southern Region Program Managers Discuss Pipeline Safety**

**Myrtle Beach, SC** - Pipeline regulators and safety experts from around the country and Puerto Rico gathered this week for the Southern Region meeting of the National Association of Pipeline Safety Representatives. The group meets annually to compare operating practices among the states and share experiences that can have a material impact on good safety performance.

Southern Region Chairman Vernon Gainey said the meeting was an unqualified success. "We are very fortunate to have so many dedicated and skilled public employees engaged in the safety effort. With the continued interest in consuming gas for residential, commercial, industrial and electric power generation, a dedicated workforce is required to ensure safe delivery." Gainey is the Pipeline Safety Supervisor at the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff.

Randy Knepper, 2013 NAPSR National Chair and Director of Safety for the New Hampshire Public Utility Commission, commented: "Natural gas has become America's favorite fuel. As the nation's infrastructure expands, it is paramount for NAPSR to focus and align its resources on the important ongoing safety activities and initiatives to assure the public that this vital product is delivered to their homes in the most safe, and efficient manner possible."

Knepper emphasized our aim is to work with operators and confirm their plans meet all pertinent safety regulations while also cautioning: "One size does not fit all when it comes to pipeline safety. The federal code is a minimum code for operators to meet. Each State has the ability to require enhancements that recognize specific state needs such as cold weather, corrosive soils, wet/dry climates and other factors."

"We are grateful for the support we receive from our federal safety partners, and – as usual, we enjoyed a stimulating exchange of ideas," Chair Knepper continued. "While we share a common objective in assuring energy is delivered as safely as possible, one important difference between State and federal regulators does exist. State safety regulators are also very often charged with economic regulation. As such, our scrutiny of new initiatives also requires we make sure an operator's safety efforts are coupled with effective and efficient procedures so the consumer is not unduly burdened with undue costs."

This year's meeting was attended by almost 45 pipeline safety professionals responsible for the implementation of both federal and state laws regarding natural gas, propane and liquid pipeline safety in their home jurisdictions stretching from Mississippi to North Carolina and Kentucky to Florida.

"The value of networking and learning from others in similar roles is tremendous," Southern Region Chair Gainey noted. "The meeting provided an opportunity to come together and build consensus positions on emerging issues related to safety culture, emergency response, establishing meaningful metrics to judge good performance and promoting public awareness."

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*The National Association of Pipeline Safety Representatives (NAPSR) is a non-profit organization of state pipeline safety officials organized in 1982, who serve to promote pipeline safety in the U.S. and its territories. NAPSR promotes the safe delivery of pipeline products by working closely with U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, the industry and interested stakeholders. NAPSR's Board of Directors is the governing body of the organization and is responsible for NAPSR policy.*

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