

Energy company blames pipeline blast on corrosion

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UNITYVILLE — An energy company now says it was corrosion on the exterior of an underground pipe that caused last summer's rupture that released enough natural gas to heat nearly 10,000 homes for a month.

Williams energy recently revealed the suspected cause of the blast to the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, the federal agency still investigating the incident.

The explosion created a 34-foot-long fracture in a 24-inch-diameter pipe.

Williams continues to inspect the Transco pipeline that failed for similar corrosion in hopes of preventing another rupture like the one near Unityville, which shook nearby homes and forced the evacuation of about 150.

None of the released gas ignited, and there were no injuries or fatalities.

But the pipeline remains out of service nine months after the June 9 mishap.

Williams' inspection work will continue through the spring and possibly into the summer, said Williams spokesman Christopher Stockton.

"Our analysis determined that the failure was caused by a unique form of corrosion that began on the external surface of the pipe," Stockton said. "We are still conducting tests, outlined in the PHMSA Corrective Action Order, before bringing the line back into service. We are essentially testing the entire line with very sophisticated tools to ensure this form of corrosion doesn't exist elsewhere."

"We want to be thorough and complete in our analysis before returning the line to service to ensure it will be operated safely."

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