



# Frequently asked questions about Natural Gas Projects



## Permitting

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### What approvals are required?

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSCW) is the state agency that determines the need for utility projects, including final route selection and service area franchise. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) also is involved in the routing process, including issuing necessary environmental permits and approvals. We also work with local governments as necessary for required permits and franchise agreements.

### What is the permitting timeframe?

The approval timeframe varies depending on the project's size and scope, but approval typically takes six months to a year.

### When will routes be finalized?

We file route proposals as required, but the ultimate decision on route selection rests with the PSCW.

### How do you select a route?

Many factors are considered when proposing a lateral route, including:

- Safety.
- Natural resources and environmental features.
- Future land development.
- Agricultural lands.
- Construction requirements.
- Overall project cost.
- Restoration requirements.

We also consider routes adjacent to existing rights-of-way and easements to be as unobtrusive as possible.

## Safety

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### How will you work to ensure safety?

State-of-the-art technology, inspections and continuous monitoring ensure public and worker safety. Natural gas is odorized, making it possible for almost anyone to detect a possible leak. We use inspection technology on all segments of the lateral, regardless of size, ensuring that any type of irregularity will be identified and corrected long before problems develop. Lateral route patrols are conducted up to four times every year.

The lateral is designed to rigid company standards, using only the most appropriate materials and installation procedures, and it will exceed current federal Department of Transportation and PSCW code requirements.

Potential for corrosion of a pipeline built today is greatly reduced through the use of modern materials and state-of-the-art inspection technologies used during construction and throughout the life of the pipeline.

### What safety features are incorporated in the lateral?

Safety is engineered into all facets of the design, construction and operation, and safety is further ensured with many layers of inspection at all stages of the process.

First, the pipe is fabricated from high-strength steel. Quality control and inspection begins during pipe manufacturing. The outside of the pipe is treated with epoxy to prevent corrosion. We also use a corrosion-prevention technology to further preserve the integrity of the steel once it is buried.

Multiple independent inspections occur during all phases of construction to ensure compliance. Only qualified welders are employed, and all welds are X-rayed during installation to ensure integrity. In addition, the line is tested with water to a pressure far greater than the maximum operating pressure to test its strength before being placed in service.

We work closely with construction contractors and Diggers Hotline to identify the lateral line's location. The route location is marked at predetermined intervals

by marker posts to warn those who dig that a natural gas lateral facility is nearby and to call before any type of digging. Contractors are required by law to request location of underground facilities prior to beginning work. When contacted, we send one of our employees to the site when contractors work near the lateral. Historically, most natural gas incidents involve damage by third parties and generally are caused by someone excavating without first asking where the facility is buried.

Frequent communication with landowners also helps ensure safety around the lateral. We work with local emergency responders to coordinate actions should an event occur. Emergency information and phone numbers are distributed to community officials, landowners and first responders.

### **How common are natural gas laterals?**

Millions of miles of underground natural gas laterals are used to transport and deliver natural gas in the United States. The natural gas transportation system operates in a fashion similar to the network of interstate, state and local highways. Large transmission pipelines move large volumes of natural gas at high pressure from producing regions to local distribution systems. Local distribution laterals operate at lower pressure and are connected to smaller service lines that deliver natural gas to homes and businesses.

### **What is the industry's safety record?**

Natural gas laterals are the safest form of energy transportation, as documented by the U.S. government. Accidents are rare.

The natural gas industry works diligently to prevent third-party damage by educating and informing the public about safety. Some of these industry programs include "call-before-you-dig" services, marking standards and direct mail campaigns.

### **What is We Energies' safety record?**

We have the highest interest in maintaining the safety of our system, and the proof is in our record. We have more than 20,000 miles of natural gas main in the state and have never experienced a serious pipeline failure since

our high-pressure operations began in 1950. We have aggressively maintained and upgraded our system, and our proactive lateral and pipeline replacement program exceeds all regulations. Every time we perform service on our facilities, we also inspect them to ensure integrity is maintained.

## **Land use and easement acquisition**

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### **How do you obtain rights to build on private property?**

We work with the property owner to obtain an easement for the area of their property where we would like to construct and maintain the natural gas lateral and/or related facilities.

### **What is an easement?**

An easement gives us land rights to use a defined part of a property for a specific purpose such as the installation, maintenance and inspection of natural gas laterals and/or related facilities.

If you construct the pipeline on my property, what restrictions do I have for future land use?

Houses and other structures can be built up to the edge of the easement; however, no permanent structures can be built and no trees can be planted within 15 feet of the centerline of the pipeline.

The easement gives us the right to install and operate laterals and to enter the easement to conduct periodic inspections and maintenance.



## Construction

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### **How are properties restored?**

Restoration follows the requirements of the permitting process. Agricultural restorations are discussed with specific landowners and meet requirements of the DNR and Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

### **Can agricultural lands be used after the lateral is installed?**

When construction and restoration are complete, crops can be grown and livestock can be grazed within the easement area. Driveways and private access roads also can be built across the lateral as long as the proper amount of soil cover is maintained. We work with the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection to develop best management practices, which specify the project's construction and restoration procedures.

### **What are the environmental impacts of a pipeline?**

Modern construction techniques have minimal and temporary environmental impact. Disruption to natural and man-made drainage patterns is temporary, and water tables are not adversely affected, if at all.

### **What is the construction process?**

We comply with all federal and state regulations regarding natural gas facility construction. Qualified contractors use modern, proven construction methods to build the lateral.

The construction process begins by surveying the route and marking the right-of-way. The right-of-way is cleared of brush, trees, large rocks and other obstructions. The right-of-way is then graded to create a surface suitable for construction work. Topsoil is stripped and separated from subsoil to ensure post-construction productivity in agricultural lands.

Next, a trench is dug. Typically, the minimum depth of cover in agricultural lands is 48 inches. In all other areas, the depth of cover varies between 36 and 48 inches.

The pipe always meets the depth of cover dictated by federal and state regulatory standards.

After trenching, sections of pipe are laid along the right-of-way. When necessary, the sections are bent to conform to the contour of the route. The pipe is then welded together by professional welders. The welds are X-rayed, coated and inspected prior to the pipe being lowered into the trench.

After the pipe is laid, the trench is backfilled, first with subsoil, then topsoil. The natural gas lateral is filled with water and pressure-tested to validate its strength and integrity.

Finally, the construction area is restored. Crews re-seed affected land as appropriate, in coordination with affected landowners, so that any signs of construction are quickly replaced by new growth. We monitor the effectiveness of these efforts to ensure successful land restoration.

*[www.we-energies.com](http://www.we-energies.com)*

