THE BI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE DISTRIBUTION CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION

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DCA Safety Congress

> Mid Year Meeting



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Tracy Lipinski Receives DCA 2024 Safety Director Award; Peter Caccese is the Safety Person of the Year

DCA named Tracy Lipinski, MP Technologies, Safety Director of the Year for 2024 and honored Peter Caccese, Hallen Construction, as Safety Person of the Year at the 2024 DCA Safety Congress March 24-26 at the Hyatt Centric French Quarter in New Orleans, Louisiana. DCA President Dan Carson of Carson Corporation presented the awards.

Safety Director of the Year

Tracy Lipinski, Safety Director at MP Technologies, has led transformative initiatives that have significantly enhanced workplace safety, employee engagement, and risk mitigation. In 2024, she spearheaded the Regional Manager – Safety Representative Partnership, a program designed to strengthen leadership accountability and safety awareness. By pairing regional managers with safety representatives, the initiative fostered better communication, training, and hazard recognition, leading to measurable improvements in safety culture. Coupled with the Electronic Pre-Task Plan (PTP) system, which enables real-time hazard identification and mitigation, Lipinski's efforts have contributed to a reduction in total recordable incident rates (TRIR), auto incidents, and utility damage claims.



(L to R) DCA President Dan Carson, Carson Corporation; Tracy Lipinski and Pete Fojtik, MP Technologies

Beyond statistics, Lipinski has cultivated a companywide safety mindset that empowers employees at every level to take ownership of their well-being and safeguard that of their colleagues. Under her leadership, MP has seen a 46% decrease in workers' compensation cases and a 40% reduction in auto damage claims over the past year. Her dedication extends beyond MP, as she actively contributes to industry-wide safety training and leadership initiatives. Lipinski's commitment to building a culture where safety is a shared responsibility has made a lasting impact, solidifying her recognition as Safety Director of the Year.

In addition to Lipinski, 2024 Safety Director of the Year nominees included Greg Dumpert, Carson Corporation.

Safety Person of the Year

Peter Caccese, Labor Foreman, is an invaluable asset to Hallen Construction where he demonstrates tenacity, leadership, and an unwavering commitment to safety. His career began in June 2012 as a laborer, where he quickly distinguished himself through hard work and a keen understanding of gas mechanics. His rapid promotion to foreman allowed him to foster a culture of excellence in both safety and efficiency among his crew. Beyond his direct team, Caccese became an active voice in Hallen's safety committee and learning teams, consistently identifying potential risks and proposing practical solutions.

Recognizing his dedication, Hallen management invited Caccese to join the Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) department two years ago. His field experience as a gas mechanic and crew leader provided crucial insights that strengthened the department's effectiveness. As a mentor to safety team members with limited gas work expertise, Caccese has played a pivotal role in bridging the gap between technical fieldwork and safety protocols.

Safety Leadership and Impact on Hallen Construction:

- Tools and equipment modernization: Led the development of a comprehensive database tracking over 1,000 tools, ensuring calibration and inspection compliance, and integrating with safety audits.
- Job briefing improvement: Partnered with the Construction Safety Research Alliance (CSRA) to assess and enhance job briefings, producing a gold-standard training video, and implementing structured coaching. This resulted in a 43% improvement in job briefing quality post-training.

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• Human performance training: Delivered 40+ classes and 180 toolbox talks in 2024, reaching over 1,000 employees on job briefings, hazard identification, and Human Performance Principles (HPP).

Caccese exemplifies the highest standards of safety leadership. His proactive approach, technical expertise, and passion for cultivating a strong safety culture make him an outstanding recipient for the Safety Person of the Year Award. His contributions have not only elevated Hallen's safety standards, but have also fostered a workplace environment where employees feel empowered to prioritize safety in every aspect of their work.

2024 Safety Person of the Year Nominees also included:

- Walter Hyle, InfraSource LLC
- John Jaeger, Grace Industries LLC

- Jim Johnston, Miller Pipeline
- Tom Osborn, Michels Utility Services, Inc.
- Mike Sugrue, InfraSource LLC

The DCA Safety Director of the Year award began in 1998 to recognize the importance of the safety director's role in today's construction industry. Company management nominates their candidate, then finalists are selected by members of the DCA Safety & Risk Management Committee and voted on by their DCA peers. The winner receives a \$1,000 cash prize and plaque.

The Safety Person of the Year award, which recognizes an individual who has made a lasting impact on safety, was suggested at a Safety Congress 11 years ago. Nominees can come from any department within a DCA member company. The winner also receives a \$1,000 cash prize and plaque.



The 2025 DCA Safety Congress

This year's Safety Congress attracted more than 50 construction industry safety professionals who gathered to network, share creative training concepts, discuss trends, and hear from leading safety training consultants, other safety directors, and risk management executives.

The event included presentations on important issues affecting the industry:

- "Leadership the NYFD Way," Richard Picciotto, Retired NYFD Chief & Author.
- "Excavation & Trenching Safety," Bruce Magee, United Rentals.
- "HDD Equipment Safety," Weston Peters, Vermeer Corporation.
- "Significant Injuries & Fatalities," Heidi Meyer-Bremer, Michels Power.
- "Root Cause Analysis," Darrel Caldwell and Howard Kinsel, Drake Field Services.

- "Sub-contractor Vetting and Management," Martin Kreutzer, SiteWise LLC.
- "Culture as a Catalyst: Elevating Safety Through Leadership," Bill Keever, Discovery Hydrovac.
- "Team Building Effective Communication," Tim Schmitt, Michels Utility Services Inc.

The Congress wrapped up with a hands-on demonstration and insightful presentation by Jason Cramer and Chris Edelman with Wright Traffic Control. They shared their latest technology that is shaping the future of innovative traffic management and enhancing job site safety.

DCA wishes to thank 2025 Safety Congress Co-Chairs Tim Schmitt of Michels Utility Services Inc. and James Carithers (formerly of Peak USG) for their efforts in organizing this year's event. The dates and venue for the 2026 Safety Congress will be announced soon.



For information please visit: www.dcaweb.org



DCA Spring 2025 Leadership Development Program



Thank you to the DCA contractor and associate members that attended the Spring Leadership Development Program at the Hyatt Regency DFW Airport. We had another fantastic group of participants and valuable discussions and insights were shared during the program.

DCA partnered with ATW Training Solutions for a program aimed at professionals working in the distribution

contracting industry who want to enhance their leadership abilities and advance their careers in the field. This program equips managers to engage and empower their teams to make an impact. Through focused learning and group activities, participants grow their skills needed to manage and lead their teams.

Industry News

Inside Infrastructure: Pipeline Safety Debate Continues, Construction Fully Engaged

by Eben Wyman, Wyman Associates for Underground Infrastructure



Underground Infrastructure — The issue of pipeline safety, especially with regard to preventing damage to underground facilities during excavation, is a longstanding priority of the excavation construction industry. Although pipeline safety legislation has traditionally been bipartisan, battles over climate change and other peripheral issues have polarized the pipeline safety debate and obstructed efforts to move a bill through the legislative process and enacted into law.

Many construction organizations worked together to advance the Promoting Innovation in Pipeline Efficiency and Safety (PIPES) Act of 2023 in the 118th Congress, which included important language intended to improve



state damage prevention programs. Unfortunately, the bill died a slow death because of growing disputes over methane emissions, project permit reform and consumer choice related to available sources of energy in the future. These supporting organizations are now pushing for the resurrection of the PIPES Act, sooner rather than later.

When the second Trump Administration took office and the new Congress commenced in January of this year, expectations for early introduction of a new pipeline safety reauthorization bill were not high. However, when the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee, which approved the PIPES Act of 2023, held a hearing in February on "Promoting and Improving Safety and Efficient Pipeline Infrastructure," it became clear there was strong interest in moving a new pipeline safety reauthorization in the first session of the 119th Congress.

Damage prevention fundamentals

While there are many facets to pipeline safety, the construction industry is especially concerned with the enduring problem of damage to underground facilities during excavation. Organizations like the Distribution Contractors Association (DCA) and others regularly support policy that encourages sharing responsibility in the damage prevention process.

A fundamental responsibility included in this process is ensuring for accurate and timely locating and marking of subsurface facilities prior to excavation. Many in the construction industry believe the next pipeline safety reauthorization bill should include language that would take steps toward improved pipeline mapping, underground facility locating, and ensuring all relevant stakeholders are required to participate in the 811 process and meet their respective responsibilities.

Excavation contractors put safety first and preventing damage to underground facilities during excavation activity is fundamental in their work. To that end, contractor organizations have consistently supported policy that reflects shared responsibility among all stakeholders and promotes four principal "pillars" of the damage prevention process:

- Full participation in the 811 process, including membership of all owners/operators of underground facilities to the state 811 center
- Accurate and timely locating of underground facilities
- Visually identifying ("potholing") of underground facilities
- Full and balanced enforcement of state damage prevention law

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While these fundamental responsibilities in damage prevention are evident, strong enforcement must be administered in a balanced and equitable manner. Locating and accurate marking responsibilities subject to facility operators should be held in the same regard as one-call notification and safe digging practices subject to excavators.

On Feb. 25, DCA testified on pending pipeline safety reauthorization legislation, with a sharp focus on proposed language intended to improve state pipeline safety programs. The hearing was overseen by the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee's Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials. DCA's witness, also an officer on the board of directors at the Pennsylvania Utility Contractors Association, was joined by representatives from the Interstate Natural Gas Association of America, the Liquid Energy Pipeline Association, and the Pipeline Safety Trust.

While the other stakeholders represented on this panel were regularly invited to testify at a pipeline safety hearing, the excavation/construction industry rarely is afforded that opportunity. The industry didn't squander it.

DCA made its point straight out of the gate. "While there are many facets to pipeline safety, our industry is especially concerned with the enduring problem of damage to underground facilities during excavation activity," DCA's witness said. "Organizations like ours and leading damage prevention organizations like the Common Ground Alliance have long supported the concept of sharing responsibility in damage prevention. A fundamental responsibility included in this process is ensuring for accurate and timely locating and marking of subsurface facilities prior to excavation."

CGA provides support for better mapping, locating

The Common Ground Alliance (CGA) is a memberdriven association of nearly 4,000 members who are damage prevention professionals in every facet of the underground utility industry. They work to promote effective damage prevention best practices of today and evaluate anticipated practices and technologies of tomorrow.

DCA has long been associated with CGA and remains very active in the organization and pointed out CGA data to back up claims that improvements are needed. According to CGA's 2023 Damage Information Reporting Tool (DIRT) Report, excavators face essentially 50-50 odds of being able to legally start work on time due to utilities not providing timely locates. This obviously undermines confidence in the 811 system.

On top of that, CGA indicates that failure to locate underground facilities accurately and on time was the root cause attributed to 34 percent of damages to



underground utilities in 2023. Records of the location of underground utilities are often inaccurate or incomplete and are sometimes unavailable to damage prevention stakeholders.

The impasse during debate of the PIPES Act of 2020 stemmed from language that mandated the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) to consider methane emissions from pipeline systems and their impact on pipeline safety. In what was considered by some as retaliation, Republicans serving in the House Energy and Commerce (E&C) Committee pushed for inclusion of provisions addressing project permit reform and ensuring "fuel choice" for energy consumers.

While these industry priorities would be beneficial to the energy and construction industries and to American consumers, they are received as 'poison bills' when it comes to including them in pipeline safety legislation. In an effort to lower the temperature in the debate, many industry supporters of both permit reform and fuel choice language made the case to congressional Republicans that there will still be broad support for a pipeline safety bill that did not include those controversial positions.

Improvements needed in state statutes

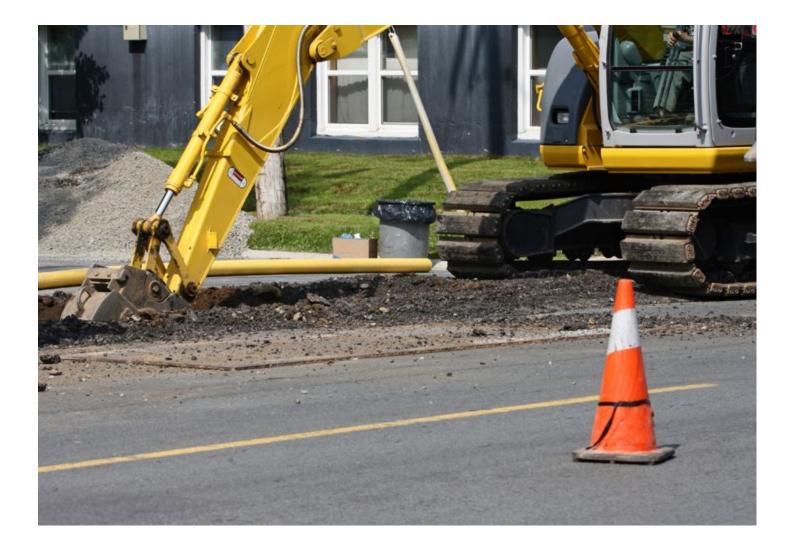
The PIPES Act of 2023 considered in the last session of Congress addressed challenges to the damage

prevention process by proposing improvements to state damage prevention programs. Specifically, the language would require state damage prevention authorities to demonstrate that they have adopted, or can show progress toward adopting, several leading practices in their damage prevention programs as part of the criteria considered when states apply for PHMSA damage prevention grant dollars.

These leading practices contained in the last bill included:

- Examining and limiting exemptions to the damage prevention process, including municipal exemptions
- Requiring a "positive response" from the facility owner prior to excavation to ensure that underground facilities are marked, or that the excavation area is clear of any underground facilities
- Requiring marking of all lines and laterals, including sewer lines and laterals
- Encouraging training for locate professionals
- Encouraging the use of state-of-the-art technologies to locate underground facilities, especially geographic information systems (GIS), which offer the most detailed and prolific pipeline mapping available

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DCA hit the need for better facility mapping hard and pointed out that the PIPES Act of 2020 began to push the issue.

The PIPES Act of 2020 included language that would require operators of gas distribution pipelines to identify and manage traceable, reliable and complete records, *including* maps and other drawings. Accurate mapping of underground utility infrastructure facilitates locating, and use of geographic information systems (GIS) is the most effective way to identify and document a wide range of data about the underground infrastructure in a given area.

Ensuring the use of available GIS mapping technologies would clearly be the most efficient way to identify and document the exact location of underground infrastructure, and that sentiment is shared by other industries. Several letters in support of GIS mapping put together by DCA in the last Congress were supported by other national associations and organizations representing engineers, equipment manufacturers and distributors, technology experts and labor unions. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 provided an unprecedented \$550 billion in new investments in American infrastructure, and a significant portion of those dollars will go toward improvements to underground systems. This means an unprecedented amount of excavation activity going underground and damage prevention is more important than ever before.

The provisions described above would take needed steps to encourage states to reduce exemptions to the 811 process. This includes locating companies employ state-of-the-art technologies, such as GIS mapping, along with published standards for documenting utility infrastructure, which will only improve the damage prevention process.

General agreement on other PHMSA issues

Industry representatives on the panel at February's pipeline safety hearing expressed support for language that would hold those who engage in physical attacks on pipeline infrastructure accountable. Specifically, the PIPES Act considered in the last Congress would



have established a criminal penalty of up to 10 years in prison for those who cause a defect to or disruption of a pipeline system.

Importantly, the provision would include pipeline facilities under construction. Organizations representing pipeline operators and those representing construction contractors generally agree on this issue. This has proven to be a tough sell with many Democrats, who claim the language would present conflicts with First Amendment provisions that allow for pipeline protests.

Among the multitude of issues also addressed at the February T&I committee hearing on pipeline safety, there was agreement between operators and contractors:

- Reforming the special permit process by establishing a permit review "shot clock" and limiting unrelated permit requirements
- Requiring PHMSA to review industry consensus safety standards more regularly
- Improving pipeline expertise of PHMSA personnel by hiring those with engineering, scientific work of other technical expertise, and not those who focus on environmental issues
- Increasing transparency of PHMSA's inspection process by ensuring reporting on inspection priorities, dates and locations

- Nominating and confirming a PHMSA Administrator to provide clarity and certainty to PHMSA operations and activities
- Requiring more regular meetings of PHMSA's advisory committees

The fact that lawmakers were unable to pass a pipeline safety reauthorization bill in the last Congress is unfortunate, but supporters of the PIPES Act are enthusiastic about getting a new bill moving sooner than later. Having the solidarity shown by the construction industry on pipeline safety, especially when it comes to damage prevention, is significant.

The nation's pipeline safety program is sound, and our pipeline network offers the safest form of transportation for a range of energy sources. Still, there is room for improvement, especially in state damage prevention programs that exempt stakeholders from the 811 process or do not require, or at least encourage, use of superior technologies to locate and mark underground facilities before excavation work begins.

Save the Date for The Fall Meeting

October 29-31, 2025 • Gaylord Texan Resort • Grapevine, TX





Insights



High Stakes Reconciliation Measure Testing GOP Loyalty

The comprehensive tax and spending package championed by President Trump faced significant challenges in the House of Representatives. At the time this edition of *DCA Insights* was written, the bill had just passed in the House by a narrow vote, mainly because of internal Republican disagreements and concerns over its fiscal implications.

On May 18, 2025, the House Budget Committee narrowly approved the bill with a 17–16 vote after initial resistance from some conservative Republicans. These Republicans shifted their stance to "present" votes following negotiations that included accelerating the implementation of Medicaid work requirements and reducing clean energy subsidies.

Despite committee approval, the bill's progression to a full House vote was delayed. The House Rules Committee was engaged in middle-of-the-night sessions to address remaining disputes, particularly concerning state and local tax (SALT) deduction caps and the bill's projected impact on the national deficit.

The reconciliation legislation, dubbed the "Big, Beautiful Bill" by the president and his allies in Congress, aims to make the 2017 tax cuts permanent, introduce tax exemptions for tips and overtime pay, and increase the child tax credit. It also proposes raising the SALT deduction cap from \$10,000 to \$30,000. To offset tax reductions, the bill includes cuts to Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act, and food assistance programs. It also seeks to repeal various green energy tax credits. The proposal would also allocate substantial funding for border security measures, including wall construction and increased immigration enforcement. Most industry estimates indicate that the bill could add approximately \$3.3 trillion to the federal deficit over the next decade.

Energy Supply Chain Weighs in on New Working Group on AI and Energy

The rapid rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and the growth of electricity demand to power new data centers to support it have placed energy infrastructure, especially for natural gas power generation, front and center, and with it the need for permitting reform. The Energy and Equipment Infrastructure Alliance (EEIA) recently sent a letter of support for the establishment of a new "Working Group on AI and Energy." EEIA represents the energy supply chain, which comprises companies and workers who build and provide equipment, materials, supplies, and services to energy infrastructure development, including facilities essential to natural gas production, transportation, and consumption.

The Working Group is chaired by Rep. Julie Fedorchak (R-ND) with industry participation including EEIA, of which DCA has been an active member for more than a decade. In the high-stakes race with China for AI dominance, policymakers are focusing on eliminating the administrative and judicial barriers to permitting that have kept the outlook for new projects at a historic low.

EEIA's letter was in response to a Request for Information (RFI) circulated by the Working Group, which asked respondents to provide input addressing three pillars:

- 1. American energy dominance and AI energy demands
- 2. Securing the energy grid
- 3. Strategic competition by outpacing China

According to EEIA, American energy dominance today is constrained by inadequate natural gas transmission capacity to allow for greater levels of production. Producers cannot produce more than the takeaway capacity of pipelines – which are now operating close to 100% of capacity.

The main reason fewer new pipeline projects are being brought forward by midstream operators is the time and cost uncertainty imposed by permitting barriers. No matter the economic opportunity, project owners are understandably reluctant to undertake the upfront costs of designing and engineering a new project or capacity expansion.

Permit applications often face reviews required by the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and related judicial challenges that drag out project timelines and escalate construction costs beyond financial viability. EEIA pointed to high-profile cases such as the canceled Atlantic Coast Pipeline and PennEast Pipeline to support these points.

CWA Sec. 401

A main area of uncertainty in the permitting process that must be considered a priority is ambiguity in Clean Water Act Section 401 (CWA 401) provisions as administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). CWA 401 allows a state to review a project's impacts on water bodies during construction and to issue permits if it finds that those impacts will be sufficiently mitigated.

In considering CWA 401 applications, some states have gamed this ambiguity by interpreting CWA language to deny construction permits based on environmental impacts of greenhouse gas emissions from combustion of the natural gas — and not on water quality considerations as intended by the CWA.

Under the first Trump Administration, the EPA completed a rulemaking providing implementation guidelines that clarified that factors outside of water quality cannot be a criterion for issuing Section 401 permits. That reform was reversed by the subsequent Biden EPA. For permitting certainty, that clarification must be enshrined by enacting permanent changes to the CWA itself.

Primary Energy Source for AI Data Centers

Natural gas is projected to be a primary energy source for AI data centers due to several key factors:

- Growth in electricity consumption: Al data centers require substantial amounts of electricity to power their operations, and natural gas power generation is expected to meet a significant portion of this increased demand.
- Availability and reliability: Ensuring the availability of natural gas is crucial for maintaining the consistent and reliable power generation necessary for the continuous operation of AI technologies. Natural gas provides a steady supply of energy.
- Efficient transportation network: Natural gas can be transported efficiently through pipelines from the wellhead to consumption points. Expanded pipeline infrastructure will ensure that the natural gas reaches its destination reliably and can be converted into the necessary electricity.
- Grid capacity enhancement: Natural gas is a viable option for increasing grid capacity, thus supporting the expanding power needs of AI data centers.

These factors underscore the importance of natural gas as a primary energy source for AI data centers, driving the need for reforms in NEPA, CWA, and judicial

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processes to streamline and expedite the development of natural gas transmission projects.

Judicial Reforms Needed to Streamline Process

Judicial reform is particularly critical in the race for AI dominance because the current permitting processes for energy infrastructure projects, including pipelines essential for natural gas transmission, face substantial delays and obstacles due to prolonged judicial and administrative challenges.

Without judicial reforms to limit challenges, fossil energy projects encounter endless litigation, which not only halts their progress but also discourages project sponsors from initiating new ventures. This stymies the advancement of energy infrastructure essential for maintaining the pace of AI development and technological innovation.

By enacting reforms that shorten review timeframes, protect review findings, and establish eminent domain authority for essential infrastructure projects, the path to achieving AI dominance becomes smoother and more predictable, fostering confidence in investment and accelerating project completion.

EEIA said it was looking forward to "working with and supporting the AI and Energy Working Group as it develops policy and legislative recommendations to enable the investments needed for American AI and Energy dominance. We also stand ready to mobilize business and worker stakeholder voices in support of legislative reforms to ensure energy is abundantly available to enable American AI dominance."

Budget Reconciliation Opens Door to Permit Reform

EEIA members were encouraged to weigh in on the budget reconciliation bill (described above), which establishes federal revenue and spending, and related policy. Many DCA policy priorities are included. They would streamline permitting processes for energy infrastructure projects, including natural gas and oil pipelines, specifically by shortening timeframes for environmental reviews, shielding environmental review findings from opposition judicial and administrative challenges, and establishing federal eminent domain authority for liquid pipelines (including carbon dioxide and hydrogen) such as now exists for natural gas pipelines.

If approved, these measures would provide major relief for project developers against frivolous litigation and other opposition that has stopped projects from moving forward and discouraged project sponsors from proposing new ones.

In addition to the budget reconciliation bill, DCA has been closely following several bills with the potential to facilitate the development of critical energy infrastructure. They include:

Improving Interagency Coordination for Review of Natural Gas Pipelines Act

This legislation would improve coordination among federal and state agencies reviewing applications for the construction of interstate natural gas pipelines. The legislation would strengthen FERC's lead agency role under the NGA by requiring schedules, concurrent reviews, and provisions to resolve disputes among permitting agencies.

Promoting Cross-Border Energy Infrastructure Act

This bill would establish a more uniform, transparent, and modern process to authorize the construction, connection, operation, and maintenance of international border-crossing facilities for the import and export of oil and natural gas and the transmission of electricity. The legislation would replace the existing permit process that has been established through an executive order at the beginning of President Trump's second term. Under the legislation, FERC would be authorized to review applications for cross-border oil and natural gas pipelines, and the Department of Energy would be authorized to review applications for cross-border electric transmission facilities.

Unlocking our Domestic LNG Potential Act

This legislation would amend the Natural Gas Act (NGA) to repeal all restrictions on the import and export of natural gas. Under current law, the NGA prohibits the import or export of natural gas, including liquefied natural gas (LNG), without completing a lengthy approval process conducted by DOE. The legislation would align the NGA with the existing national policy on the import and export of other fossil fuels, including crude oil and petroleum products.

Senate Panel Hears Industry Priorities on Pipeline Safety

Pipeline safety reauthorization continues to be a top priority on DCA's legislative agenda. DCA members may recall the pipeline safety bill in the previous congress died a slow death, mainly because of past disputes over climate change issues that are now part of the pipeline safety discussion.

When the 119th Congress convened in January, introduction of a new pipeline safety reauthorization measure did not seem like a high priority for emboldened Republicans enjoying their control of the White House, Senate, and House of Representatives. However, following a hearing in the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee in late February, it was clear that there was strong interest in getting a new reauthorization bill in play. DCA testified at this hearing, making the point that DCA fully supported the T&I bill in the last congress, and it encouraged the committee to introduce and advance a new bill as soon as possible.

DCA helped develop and garnered support for language that would improve state damage prevention programs. The bill set additional criteria for states to consider when applying for PHMSA damage prevention grants. Specifically, states that implement or can show they are moving toward implementation of several "recommended practices" as part of their programs would stand a better chance of securing PHMSA damage prevention dollars. These practices include identifying and eliminating exemptions to their 811 laws, requiring locating and marking of all lines and laterals (including municipal service lines), and encouraging widespread use of state-of-the-art technologies, such as geographic information systems (GIS), to locate underground facilities.

In mid-May, the Senate Commerce Committee's Subcommittee on Surface Transportation, Freight, Pipelines, and Safety held its own pipeline safety hearing. The panel heard from witnesses from the American Gas Association (AGA), the American Petroleum Institute (API), and the Liquid Energy Pipeline Association (LEPA).

According to the CEO of LEPA, improving state damage prevention programs — pressuring states to strengthen their statutes, bolster enforcement, and allow for more use of modern technology for pipeline inspections — would result in increased efficiency while providing an equal or greater level of safety.

AGA, an organization that represents DCA's main customer base, said a goal should be "limiting deaths and injuries due to unintended excavation damage incidents," and added that it supports inclusion of the damage prevention language in a new reauthorization measure.

Criminal Penalties for Unlawful Protesting Activities

Another DCA priority issue that industry representatives brought up multiple times during this hearing was the need to establish penalties for criminal acts during protesting events. LEPA made a strong case for increased penalties, citing several scenarios where protesters have turned valves and even "took a rifle shot" at active pipelines as well as those under construction. AGA supported this, stating that "strengthening criminal penalties on those who sabotage or purposely damage pipeline operations" would be needed steps toward mitigating this enduring problem.

Referring to these protesters as "eco-terrorists," Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX.) said now is the time to crack down on unlawful protesting activities, adding that promotion of feature films like "How to Blow Up a Pipeline" reflect an unhealthy tolerance of unlawful and often dangerous protesting activity.

Pipeline SMS — Watchful of Federal Mandates

Implementation of pipeline safety management systems (SMS) in the pipeline industry has proven to be a successful collaboration between pipeline operators and the contractors who work on their behalf. The pipeline SMS Industry Team now represents all stakeholders involved in the construction and operation of the nation's pipeline system, and the industry has done a remarkable job at staying ahead of any mandate that would require SMS approaches to safety.

While government entities have been very receptive to industry efforts to implement SMS, watchdog groups remain skeptical and continue to push for requirements related to SMS. DCA continues to push back on any SMS mandate in any form. Instilling a "culture of safety" in the industry should not turn into a "check the box" mandate that is contrary to the very goals SMS advocates are pursuing. Still, groups like the Pipeline Safety Trust (PST), which testified at this hearing, continue to imply that a federal mandate is needed.

PST recognized the many calls for widespread use of SMS in safety operations, "but only half of gas utilities have made the commitment" to actual implementation and that driving adoption of pipeline SMS, "all systems, all operators, large and small" is needed.

The hearing underscored bipartisan recognition of the need to reauthorize PHMSA with enhanced resources and updated regulations to ensure pipeline safety. While there was consensus on the importance of modernizing infrastructure and addressing emerging energy technologies, divisions remained over the pace of regulatory implementation and the environmental considerations of expanding pipeline networks.

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DCA Deep Dive Webinar Page Now Live – Watch On-Demand Recordings!

DCA is excited to announce that the DCA Deep Dive Webinar page is now live on the DCA website!

This new member-exclusive page gives you on-demand access to archived recordings of our 2025 Deep Dive Webinars, with topics that are timely, relevant, and impactful to the underground infrastructure and natural gas distribution industries.

Now available:

- January Al Implementation in the Distribution Contractor Industry
- February Al Implementation in the Distribution Contractor Industry Pt. 2
- May Toolbox Talks Safety Roundtable

We'll continue to add new recordings as they become available throughout the year. **Please note:** You must have an active DCA member account to access the videos.

Access the webinar archive here: <u>https://dcaweb.org/</u> events/deep-dive-webinars.

To access our webinars from the DCA homepage, navigate to the top toolbar and click 'Events,' then click 'DCA Deep Dive Webinars'.

We look forward to your participation in these sessions designed to bring industry insights directly to you — wherever you are.

Have a question regarding DCA's Deep Dive Webinars? Please reach out to **Jacob Adams Mireles** at jadams@dcaweb.org. ▲



Calendar

2025 & 2026 DCA and Industry Events

2025

JULY 14-17

DCA Mid Year Meeting Grand Geneva Resort & Spa Lake Geneva, Wisconsin dcaweb.org

SEPTEMBER 15-19

IPLOCA 2025 Convention SwissHotel Izmir, Turkey www.iploca.com

SEPTEMBER 16-18

Global Damage Prevention Summit Hilton Anatole Hotel Dallas, Texas www.actsnowinc.com/globaldps/registration

OCTOBER 29-31

DCA Fall Meeting Gaylord Texan Resort & Convention Center Grapevine, Texas dcaweb.org

2026

JANUARY 27-29

Underground Infrastructure Conference (UIC) Henry B. González Convention Center San Antonio, Texas ui-conference.com

FEBRUARY 11-15

2025 PLCA Convention Arizona Biltmore Phoenix, Arizona www.plca.org

FEBRUARY 23-28

DCA Annual Convention Trump National Doral Miami, Florida dcaweb.org

APRIL 20-24

Pipe Line Contractors Association of Canada (PLCAC) Convention Hyatt Regency Maui Resort & Spa Maui, Hawaii www.pipeline.ca

ATTENTION ALL DCA MEMBERS!

So you do not miss out on future meeting and event notices, please have your company's IT representative whitelist all emails from dcaweb.org. If you have any questions, please contact Jacob Adams Mireles at jadams@dcaweb.org.

Member News



(L to R) D. James Umpleby III, Joseph (Joe) E. Creed

Caterpillar Names Joe Creed as Next CEO; Jim Umpleby to Become Executive Chairman

Caterpillar Inc. has appointed Chief Operating Officer Joseph E. Creed as its next CEO, effective May 1, succeeding Chairman and CEO D. James Umpleby III. Umpleby will transition to the role of executive chairman after nearly 45 years at the company, including eight as CEO.

Creed, a 28-year veteran of the company, will also join Caterpillar's board of directors on May 1.

Umpleby became CEO in 2017 and led the execution of a long-term strategy focused on profitable growth. Under his leadership, Caterpillar achieved record adjusted profit per share in 2024, increasing more than sixfold during his tenure.

"I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to work with Caterpillar's dedicated global team of employees and dealers for my entire career," Umpleby said. "I have great confidence in my successor Joe Creed and the entire Executive Office to lead our global team as Caterpillar embarks upon our second century."

Creed joined Caterpillar in 1997 and has held leadership roles across the company's financial, energy, and power divisions. In 2023, he was named chief operating officer.

"I'm proud to work alongside our talented Caterpillar employees and dealers as we continue to support customers across our diverse businesses," Creed said. "I look forward to leading this amazing team as we build upon Caterpillar's legacy of excellence."

Debra L. Reed-Klages, who has served on the board since 2015 and as independent presiding director since 2022, praised Umpleby's leadership and affirmed the board's confidence in Creed.

"Joe's selection as CEO is the result of a multi-year succession planning process by the Board of Directors," she said. "He is a proven leader with significant experience in Caterpillar's global businesses."



Gabe's Construction Company Launches New Website

In May 2025, Gabe's Construction Company announced the launch of its newly redesigned website at **www. gabes.com**. The new design is the culmination of the company's effort to better reflect the people and purpose behind its work.

The new **gabes.com** tells its story the way it deserves to be told — through the voices of its team, the values they live by, and the essential work they are proud to deliver every day.

After more than eight decades of building projects that power and connect communities, from high-voltage infrastructure to HDD and constructability reviews, Gabe's mission stays the same: Connections for a Better Life. And now, it has a website that connects just as clearly. Gabe's Construction Company is based in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, and has served the Midwest region since 1942 with services ranging from horizontal direction drilling and high-voltage conduit installation to fiber optic services and collaborative delivery.



Subsite Launches M10 Beacon for Underground Utility Installation

Contractors can more easily and reliably run short shots of fiber lines and other underground utilities using the new M10 HDD guidance beacon from Subsite.. The M10 beacon is designed for use with compact Ditch Witch horizontal directional drills (HDDs) like the JT5 and small drills from other manufacturers.

The M10 beacon has a diameter of less than1 inch one of the smallest beacons on the market. Its compact design allows contractors to do short-run jobs, like fiber drops to homes, using a smaller bit size on their compact machine. This can help contractors keep turf undisturbed and produce less cuttings or other waste on jobsites.

Subsite also built industry-best durability into the M10 beacon. With design features like an epoxied antenna, the beacon offers superior durability across numerous projects, helping contractors stay productive and efficient.

"The M10 beacon addresses a need in the market for a smaller beacon to run short lines under yards, roads, and sidewalks," said Braxton Smith, product manager for Subsite. "Combining this small, durable beacon with a compact or mini drill creates the perfect pairing for contractors to complete these jobs efficiently, reliably, and with less waste."

The M10 beacon has an operating depth of up to 55 feet and comes with a standard warranty of one year or 350 hours. As part of the Marksman HDD Guidance System, it also offers time-saving benefits like automatic beacon-to-tracker connections.



Vermeer Texas-Louisiana

From Recruitment to Retention: How Vermeer Texas-Louisiana is Building the Next Generation of Skilled Workers

The construction industry is taking a hit from the workforce shortage, but Vermeer Texas-Louisiana is taking action, both through its internallydeveloped programs and its support for the Vision 2025 program, a communitybased, school-to-work school partnership strategy.

Vermeer Texas-Louisiana, founded in 1978, is the authorized dealer for Vermeer Corporation, with 14 locations across the region. The company provides equipment sales and rentals, parts, and service support for customers in the tree care, landscaping, wood-waste recycling, and underground construction industries.

"Finding skilled workers in today's market is very challenging for us, as it is for most equipment dealers," said Whit Perryman, Vermeer Texas-Louisiana's Chief Executive Officer since 2005. "We have done a couple of things in the last few years to address this, in addition to increasing referral fees for our team members who recommend a technician that joins our company."

A few years ago, the company hired a team member to focus on talent acquisition so that it could create a consistent point of contact for its local technical schools. That person is also tasked with attending career fairs and developing relationships with those programs, as well as helping to get the word out at schools with technical programs about the rewards a construction career can offer.

Perryman's team also created a service technician development internship program in 2023. The program provides the ability to hire students pursuing a career in diesel technology while they are still in school.

"We provide them a mentor technician, pay them while they are working in our shop, and help them cover their tuition costs," he said.

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In a little over a year, 20 interns have been brought into the company through this program, and several have already been hired, post-graduation, as full-time techs.

"We're hoping that by getting them in early we can help them become a part of our team, and then when they graduate, they won't want to go anywhere else," Perryman said.

Encouraging Growth and Development

Management is also doing a good job of encouraging growth and development in its technician pool, according to Perryman.

"We created a recognition program that celebrates their achievements in attaining levels of advancement within our OEM's [Original Equipment Manufacturer] certification programs," he said. "That's been really successful for us. We currently have over 80% of our technician pool with at least the base level of certification from either Vermeer or Bobcat." Perryman says finding skilled workers is "a huge problem for our industry, but it is also a problem in the auto industry. Many times, we are competing for the same talent. In my opinion, our industry has a lot more to offer new technicians compared to the auto industry. Many of our technicians have been able to move into other roles within the business such as sales, product specialists, or management."

Having a strong technical background is important in helping provide solutions to customers, and it has been helpful to many of the team members who have been promoted from within the organization.

The year ahead will see the company continue to focus on its technician development program. "We have identified and partnered with 10 associate's degree programs in Texas and one in Oklahoma that have diesel tech programs producing talented technicians," Perryman said.

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The goal next year is to get into the local high schools in the region and continue to encourage careers in the trades.

"I believe the trade programs are starting to gain momentum again as kids realize they can find a challenging, enjoyable career making great money without going to get a four-year degree," Perryman said. "We just need to work at getting that message out, and that will be a big mission for our team in 2025."

Technology continues to be something that Vermeer Texas-Louisiana is embracing, too. Telematics (an interdisciplinary field encompassing telecommunications, vehicular technologies, electrical engineering, and computer science) is facilitating the company's ability to help customers identify and overcome potential service issues.

"We have put a team in place to start working on this and how we can really impact the customer's productivity," Perryman said.



McElroy Again Receives OSHA Recognition for Commitment to Workplace Safety

On Wednesday, May 7, 2025, McElroy was recognized for its commitment to workplace safety and its participation in the Occupational Safety and Health Administration

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Oklahoma Labor Commissioner Leslie Osborn presented the company with a proclamation commending leadership and employees at McElroy's campus at 5124 S. 100th E Ave. She and OSHA Consultation Director Jason Hudson also presented company leadership with a flag commemorating McElroy's SHARP-certified status.

SHARP is an on-site consultation program that offers confidential occupational safety and health services to small- and medium-sized businesses in the U.S., free of charge. Consultants from local agencies or universities work with employers to identify workplace hazards, provide advice for compliance with OSHA standards, and assist in establishing and improving safety and health programs.

"We all can use another set of eyes to help make sure we're doing the right thing here at McElroy and providing a safe workplace for our team," said McElroy Environmental Health and Safety Manager Tony Little.

While addressing the crowd during the presentation, Osborn commended McElroy's continued emphasis on employee safety. McElroy, she said, has a long history of ensuring safe working conditions for the hundreds of team members who come to work each day.

"Over the course of my seven years as Oklahoma Labor Commissioner, it's been nice to see repeat customers," Osborn said. "McElroy was the first group I was able to visit to give a safety award when I was first elected, and I've been able to come consistently."

That consistency, she added, is a testament to McElroy's dedication to providing a safe environment for its employees.

"That tells me that McElroy really does care about safety and care that employees are able to safely return to their families each night. It's so nice to see a company that takes safety so seriously," she said.

To become SHARP certified, companies must first reach out to their local OSHA representatives for a consultation visit. During the visit, representatives study the company's entire workplace, doing walk-throughs of facilities, examining existing safety programs, interviewing employees, and going through the company's training records. The process is time and labor-intensive, and once completed OSHA representatives provide a report of their findings.



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Viking Mat Co. vikingmat.com

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