

June 18, 2019

The Honorable Bobby Rush
Chairman
Energy and Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Energy
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Fred Upton
Ranking Member
Energy and Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Energy
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Dear Chairman Rush and Ranking Member Upton:

As a leading technology provider to electric, gas and water utilities, Aclara Technologies, LLC, urges the subcommittee to support the use of technology to improve the safety, performance, and efficiency of our country's natural gas distribution networks. We support provisions in the "Safer Pipelines Act of 2019" discussion draft that would increase the use of methane leak detection technologies at facilities in high consequence areas (HCA) and urge Congress to support deployment of methane leak detection technologies and gas pressure monitoring along distribution lines in HCA as well to improve safety, system integrity, and performance.

The U.S. currently has 2.4 million miles of natural gas pipeline infrastructure and approximately 400 storage fields, which combined carry around 25% of the total energy consumed in the U.S. The low cost and relative abundance of natural gas is driving the aggressive expansion of new pipeline infrastructure. It is also causing increased use of existing infrastructure, putting pressure on an ageing system. As our reliance on natural gas continues to expand, so will the pressures on our natural gas infrastructure. As such, it is imperative that Congress works to encourage adoption of methane detection technologies *along natural gas distribution lines*, which can reduce the occurrence and severity of methane leaks which cost utilities money and can present a significant risk to public health.

Aclara offers its strong support for the advancement of technologies that can improve the safety of our nation's natural gas distribution networks by providing enhanced monitoring, detection, and control capabilities. These technologies are an important and cost-effective way to increase reliability, efficiency, and safety of our ageing infrastructure. Continuous gas pressure monitoring enhances early leak detection by recognizing and interpreting gas line pressure fluctuations. A sudden, unexplained drop in pressure could be a burst pipe or a gas leak. Utilizing an AMI supported gas pressure monitoring system will provide utilities with a constant stream of data to alert them to these potential issues. Smart pressure monitoring requires a wireless communications system including sensors that measure pressure at critical points, software that analyses the pressure status at such points and calculates responses to achieve a desired pressure, and a controller device to prompt smart valves whose use can save energy. Smart gas pressure management will allow utilities to better monitor and control system gas pressures according to demand. While reducing potential leaks, it can also reduce operating cost associated with site visits and "linepack".

Advanced leak detection technologies are crucial to decreasing the risk of major gas leaks and accidents. Take, for example, the Aliso Canyon methane leak in California, which lasted over

four months and released approximately 97,100 metric tons of methane into the atmosphere (more than the estimated *total* annual emissions from the entire U.S. pipeline infrastructure). Leaks like the one in Aliso Canyon demonstrate that the magnitude of risk faced by the natural gas industry is great, and that even more substantial risks exist for citizens living in the surrounding area and the environment. The key to reducing methane leakage – and associated environmental, safety, and economic impacts - from natural gas distribution networks is being able to locate and close leaks quickly and effectively.

For these reasons, we support the provision in the “Safer Pipelines Act of 2019” that requires the installation of automatic leak detection and shutoff valves for pipeline facilities located in high consequence areas. The distribution lines around those facilities are also, however, vulnerable to leaks and pressure irregularities, and methane leak detection technologies should also be deployed along those distribution lines within high consequence areas as well.

Aclara offers its full support for the expanded use of real-time methane leak detection and gas pressure monitoring technologies around natural gas facilities and associated distribution lines within high consequence areas. These technologies will significantly improve system integrity and safety and will be crucial as the country’s natural gas distribution networks continue to age and as the risks for utilities and network operators rise. Thank you for your consideration of our comments and we look forward to working with the subcommittee on this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Josh Chaise
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Aclara Technologies, LLC

Contact Information

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