

For Immediate Release

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MA and NH Towns Question Serious Health Impacts of Kinder Morgan Proposed Gas Pipeline

Jan. 14. Vowing not to endanger their residents' health - and especially that of children - three pipeline coalitions, representing municipal officials in 40 Massachusetts and New Hampshire towns, sounded the alarm today about the known effects natural gas pipeline compressor stations have on human health.

"Studies show that these compressor stations emit various chemicals and materials that can double the risk of newborn autism with exposure in the third trimester of pregnancy, along with increasing the likelihood of asthma and respiratory problems," said Tad Putney, the town administrator of Brookline, NH. "As town leaders we have a responsibility to stand up for our citizens on this issue."

Municipal officials are reacting to plans by Kinder Morgan to construct compressor stations in Windsor, MA, Northfield, MA, Dracut MA, and New Ipswich, NH as part of a proposed high-pressure pipeline to carry gas from Pennsylvania to Dracut, MA. The compressor stations concentrate and move the gas along the pipeline.

While Kinder Morgan has stated in writing that air pollutants would be removed before the gas is transported through its pipeline, its recent filing with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission confirmed that up to 100 tons of toxins, volatile organic compounds and carcinogens would be emitted by the facilities annually. Municipal officials are further concerned that additional compressor stations are likely to be added once the pipeline is in service, citing recent news about a possible compressor station to be located in Winchester, N.H.

The Windsor, Northfield and New Ipswich compressor stations would be 41,000 horsepower and the Dracut facility would be 23,000 horsepower.

Representatives from all three coalitions denounced the potential specter of their citizens suffering health problems because of Kinder Morgan's compressor stations. Links between the emissions from the compressor stations and nosebleeds, respiratory problems as well as cancer are of great concern to Temple, N.H. selectman Gail Cromwell. "The levels of nitrogen dioxide emissions are bad enough, leading to increased respiratory and cardiovascular problems. The projected emissions of formaldehyde, however, are downright scary as a known cause of cancer. Why are our children and residents being put at risk like this? It is wrong", said Cromwell.

In Dracut, MA, Selectman Cathy Richardson expressed concern given how close the planned compressor station is to a school and other vital facilities. "I am very concerned about health risks, especially given the close proximity of the proposed compressor station site to an elementary school, residential neighborhood, fire and police stations and agricultural sites," said Richardson.

Jed Proujansky, a selectman in Northfield, MA noted “The proposed pipeline will run through the watersheds and aquifers of Northfield and other towns. The know emissions of chemicals and other pollutants in and around our water supplies and in the air from a pipeline and compressor station is a recipe for disaster. We cannot in good conscience allow this to happen.”

Boston pediatrician Dr. Curt Nordgaard studies the impact of compressor stations and recently spoke to a standing-room-only crowd at the Temple, New Hampshire Elementary School, located a quarter mile from the current proposed compressor station site in New Hampshire.

The anticipated health impacts that Nordgaard reviewed include an increased frequency of pollution-related symptoms like nosebleeds and headaches, but also higher rates of new diagnoses for some chronic diseases like asthma. Furthermore, people with chronic conditions like asthma, COPD or heart disease would be more likely to require emergency treatment or hospitalization due to increased levels of toxic air pollution.

“Unfortunately compressor stations like the one proposed for New Ipswich would not be as effective as a gas-fired power plant at removing toxic and cancer-causing chemicals like formaldehyde from their emissions: 90 percent are removed for a gas-fired power plant and only about 40 percent for a gas-fired compressor station,” said Nordgaard. “At this time, I do not think it’s possible to rule out increased cancer risks due to the projected emissions.”

In fact, after his southern New Hampshire visit, Nordgaard said Wednesday he remains concerned about the impact of formaldehyde and nitrogen dioxide emission levels, along with health risks from particulate matter and carbon monoxide releases from the proposed compressor stations.

The NH Municipal Pipeline Coalition consists of municipal officials from Amherst, Brookline, Fitzwilliam, Greenville, Litchfield, Mason, Merrimack, Milford, New Ipswich, Pelham, Richmond, Rindge, Temple, Troy and Winchester, NH. The Municipal Coalition Against the Pipeline consists of officials from Ashfield, Conway, Deerfield, Gill, Leverett, Montague, New Salem, Northfield, Orange, Warwick and Wendell, MA. The Northeast Municipal Gas Pipeline Coalition consists of officials from Andover, Ashby, Dracut, Dunstable, Groton, Littleton, Lunenburg, Lynnfield, North Reading, Peabody, Pepperell, Tewksbury, Townsend and Wilmington, MA.