

TransCanada's Lack of Emergency Response Plans

- TransCanada tells landowners that “any additional additives to the oil are no more hazardous than the oil itself.” – With reports of elevated cancer rates in areas around the mining in Canada, this is not a comforting and adequate statement.
- TransCanada will not release or make an Emergency Response Plan available for review to communities, landowners, or public safety officials.
- TransCanada spokesman James Millar said regulators “will not allow us to release a plan on concerns related to national security, landowner privacy, and other considerations.” However, not having an available plan is a matter of national security. Also, landowners want to know, and have the right to be informed.
- In lieu of an emergency response plan, landowners have asked for information regarding contents and safety procedures in the event of a leak. A simple warning label that tells what to watch out for, safe distances, and other basic precautions in the event of a leak has been denied to landowners and communities. TransCanada tells landowners, “you will not receive a warning label.”
- TransCanada’s “Pipeline Risk Assessment” for its State Department permit application has a postulated 1.4 spills along the Keystone pipeline system during a 10 year period. The projections are theoretical and not based on TransCanada’s actual tar sands pipeline experience on the Keystone I line. Keystone I has leaked 12 times in 12 months as of June 2011.
- TransCanada’s Keystone tar sands pipeline system is the company’s first oil-like pipeline. The company has no prior experience.
- TransCanada’s 2009 corporate responsibility report shows 25 “reportable” spills for 2009. This was up from 9 “reportable” spills in 2008. Each year that goes by shows their ability to operate pipelines safely decreasing.
- In a summary of TransCanada’s record of gas spills from 2000 through 2005, TransCanada had 576 spills in the past 6 years, for an average of 96 spills per year.
- TransCanada has stated they do not know to what capacity the materials flowing through the pipeline will corrode or abrade such things as the pipe wall, valves, or pumps. They stated, “*This can only be determined after the pipeline has been put into service and that might take years to determine.*”
- The SCADA leak detection systems have not always detected small leaks that develop in pipelines, which over time can develop into a major leak that may not be detected for days, weeks, or even months before the leak can be found. TransCanada says as many as 1.7 million gallons can escape before the detection system notices.
- According to TransCanada’s Construction Mitigation and Reclamation Plan, “In the event of a fire, local emergency responders and local firefighters will take actions to prevent the crude oil fire from spreading to adjacent foliage or structures. Fire departments might choose to extinguish a small or moderate-sized crude oil fire, but in many cases the best course of action may be to let the fire burn itself out.”
- The question then is, do local and volunteer fire departments have the training and equipment needed to fight tar sands fires, and if not, who is going to ensure that happens and pay for it? What are the risks to volunteer fire fighters when fighting tar sands fires?