

2024 APGA SOAR Survey Topic: Employee Safety		
Question	Question Type	Maximum Points
Does your system include a statement from management in your Safety Manual that expresses a commitment to safety that will be followed for all work practices?	Yes/ No	2
Does your utility have a formal training program addressing employee safety?	Yes / No	2
Properties and hazards of Natural Gas	Yes / No	1
Odorant Safety Also click if utility personnel do not handle odorant because the utility receives odorized gas and doesn't operate its own odorizers.	Yes/ No	0.5
Which of the topics listed below are included in your system's safety manual or are address in employee's safety training? Check all that apply	Fire safety/Use of fire extinguishers	0.5
	Personal Protective Equipment and Clothing	0.5
	Respiratory Protection/Use of respirators	0.5
	Ladder & Tool Safety	0.5
	Excavation, Trenching and Shoring	0.5
	Work Area Protection (barricading and traffic control)	0.5
	Pipe Purging	0.5
Does your utility conduct periodic, large scale (e.g. 30 minutes or longer) safety meetings for all field employees?	Yes, quarterly or more often = 2 Points Yes, less than quarterly but at least once per year = 1 Point No = 0 Points	2
Does gas system management attend large scale safety meetings at least once per year?	Yes / No	2
Does your utility conduct periodic short format (e.g. 10-15 minute "Tailgate" sessions) for all field employees?	Yes, at least monthly = 2 Points Less than monthly = 1 Point No = 0 Points	2
Does your company require pre-job safety briefings at all job sites?	Yes, even on routine jobs = 2 Points Sometimes, Only on "high risk" or non-routine jobs = 1 Point No = 0 Points	2
Does your utility have a mechanism for employees to submit safety suggestions or "near miss" information?	Yes / No	1
Does your system encourage employees to "stop the job" when they observe an unsafe practice or work environment?	Yes / No	1
Please describe how you verify that your employees feel empowered to "stop the job":	Open Ended Response [SOAR Task Group may award up to 1 Point]	1
Do 1st line supervisors attend at least 90% of all safety meetings with their crews?	Yes / No	1
Does your utility conduct safety meetings for administrative and office staff?	Yes / No	1
Is your system's safety program managed by or periodically evaluated by a trainer or manager/evaluator that is an employee safety SME? <i>Note: That individual may be a Certified Safety Professional or participated in training programs specific to employee safety.</i>	Yes/ No	1
Does your utility have a formal or informal safety recognition program for your employees? For example: A formal program may reward your field employees with a steak lunch if they go a specified number of days without a safety incident. An informal program may simply recognize individuals for addressing a safety issue during a staff meeting.	Yes, we have a safety recognition program with stated goals = 2 Points Yes, we have a safety recognition program but no stated goals = 1 Point No = 0 Points	2
Does your utility provide fire-resistant clothing to field workers that may work in flammable gas atmospheres?	Yes / Our procedures do not allow workers to enter flammable gas atmospheres = 2 Points No = 0 Points	2
Does your safety program specify working conditions under which workers must wear fire-resistant clothing?	Yes or N/A = 1 Point No = 0 Points	1

Does your utility have a policy requiring contractors to have a suitable worker safety program?	Yes or N/A = 2 Points No = 0 Points	2
Does your utility have a formal written policy for vehicle safety?	Yes / No	1
Seat belt use	Yes	1
Does the policy address (Check all that apply)? Cell phone use	Yes	1
No formal written policy		0
Does your utility offer safe driver training?	Yes = 2 Points No = 0 Points	2
Does your utility submit an OSHA form 300 or use another evaluation and tracking method that includes comparable incident rate and documentation?	Yes or equivalent = 1 Point No = 0 Points	1
Does gas system leadership review employee safety incident rate data at least annually?	Yes / No	1
Does your system have formal procedure for investigating injuries that meet the OSHA recordable definition? <i>Note: An OSHA recordable injury is any injury where the employee received medical treatment beyond first aid, lost consciousness, or resulted in an employee being placed on restricted work activity or transferred to another job.</i>	Yes / No	1
Do employee injury investigations result in written reports identifying causes and corrective actions?	Yes / No	1
Are findings and recommendations of safety, injury, near miss, or stop-the-job investigations shared with employees with similar jobs or work so that all employees may benefit from the knowledge gained from the specific incident? (leave the name of the parties involved out of the investigation) This can be communicated via email, safety meetings or team meetings.	Yes / No	1
Does your system consider ergonomics for your workforce? <i>Note: This could include sit/stand desks for office personnel or steps for trucks for your field personnel, etc.</i>	Yes / No	1
Total Points Available		41

2024 APGA SOAR Survey

Topic: System Integrity

Question	Question Type	Maximum Points
Do your procedures address what system pipe and facility asset records are retained? <i>Note: This includes construction, inspection, and maintenance records.</i>	Yes/ No	1
Do you have a procedure that defines how long records are to be retained (life of pipe, 5 years, etc.)?	Yes/ No	2
Do you have a system of record for your pipeline assets (GIS, organized paper copies)?	Yes/ No	1
Does your utility have standard forms/formats for documenting inspections, repairs, 3rd party damages and other activities related to operations, maintenance and regulatory compliance?	Yes/ No	2
Does your utility have a program in place for backing up critical hard copy and/or electronic records?	Yes/ No	1
Does your system track emergency response time and have an internal goal?	Yes / No	2
Does your utility utilize the Incident Command System framework and if so are employees trained ?	Yes / No	1
Have all levels of personnel taken the free online NIMS ICS training courses	All Applicable Employees = 1 Point Emergency Responders Only = 0.5 Point No = 0 Points	1
Does your utility have a written checklist/script to be followed by utility personnel who receive odor complaints and other potential emergencies from customers and the general public?	Yes/ No	3
How often does your system participate in table top exercises and/or mock emergency drills?	At least once per year = 2 Points At least once every 2 years = 1.5 Points At least once every 3 years = 1 Point Less frequently than every 3 years = 0.5 Point We have no fixed schedule = 0 Point Never = 0 Points	2
Does your system include emergency responders in your table top exercises or mock drills? Emergency Responders may include any entity who have an active role in emergency management and incident response according to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) National Incident Management System (NIMS) such as fire dept, police dept, 911 centers, EMTs, Emergency Management Agencies, hospitals, etc. The table top exercise or mock drill may include one or more of these entities.	Yes, at least annually = 2 Points Yes, but less than once per year = 1 Point Never = 0 Points	2
Does your system have mutual aid agreements in place with other utilities, trade associations, and/or contractors for gas related or general business continuation agreements in times of crisis or catastrophic events? (Such as the APGA Mutual Aid Agreement) <i>Note: Not just electric mutual aid for combination joint utilities.</i>	Yes / No	1
In the past 3 years, has your state regulator identified a violation (or NOPV) that has not been resolved?	Yes / No	2
Does your utility conduct internal audits to identify potential violations of pipeline safety regulations and utility procedures?	Yes = 2 Points No = 0 Points	2
If yes, how often are internal audits conducted?	At least once per year = 3 Points At least once every 2 years = 2 Points Less frequently than once every 2 years = 1 Point No Fixed Schedule = 0.5 Point We don't conduct audits = 0 Points	3

How often do you review your DIMP plan?	Annually = 3 Points Every 3 Years = 1 Point Every 5 Years or Longer = 0 Points	3
Please provide two examples of Accelerated Actions identified in your DIMP program that your system performs and the corresponding Performance Measures.	Open Ended Response [SOAR Task Group may award up to 4 Points]	4
Does your utility participate in a utility coordination council or similar regional or local damage prevention group?	Yes = 2 Points There are no such groups in our area = 2 Points No = 0 Points	2
Is your utility current on all required surveys, monitoring and inspections required by your operations and maintenance manual and procedures?	All surveys, monitoring and inspections are current = 2 Points One survey, monitoring or inspection is overdue = 1 point Two or more surveys, monitoring or inspections are overdue = 0 points	2
Does your utility have a clear, understandable and well-communicated chain of command? It does not have to be in writing as long as all employees understand who they report to, who reports to them and their level of authority.	Yes / No	1
Does the chain of command include provisions for addressing communications and management when one or more members are absent?	Yes / No	1
Is your utility's upper management involved in decisions concerning system safety and integrity?	Upper management is fully involved and committed = 4 Points Upper management is marginally involved = 2 Points Upper management is not involved = 0 Points	4
Does your system investigate the cause of an unexpected change in percent of UAF?	Yes / No	1
What was the UAF percent for your system 3-year weighted average based upon sales volume?	Less than 1 percent = 3 points 1-2 percent = 2 points 2-3 percent = 1.5 points 3-4 percent = 1 point 4-5 percent = 0.5 points >5% = 0 points	3
Does your utility have process for accurately accounting for gas used in utility operations (e.g. line heaters and other system use)? This can include actually measuring gas used in utility operations or estimating unmeasured system use.	Yes = 1 Point N/A - We don't use any natural gas in our operations = 1 Point No = 0 Points	1
Does your utility investigate the causes of 3rd party damages?	Yes = 2 Points No = 0 Points	2
Does your utility submit information on excavation damages to the Common Ground Alliance DIRT (Damage Information Reporting Tool) Program?	Yes / No	1
Has your utility reviewed the Common Ground Alliance Best Practices and implemented those that are applicable?	Yes / No	1
Does your utility participate in the plastic pipe failure data collection project (http://www.apga.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3313)?	Yes / No	1
Does your system have the ability to access an enterprise fund should you need to perform emergency O&M or integrity management activities?	Yes/No	1
How does your system ensure that technology, procedural, equipment, and organizational changes have been reviewed and approved by the appropriate individual(s) at your system to maintain system integrity?	Open Ended Response [SOAR Task Group may award up to 1 Point]	1
Do you document the approval process for these changes?	Yes/No	1
Does your system have a process in place to ensure changes that impact the safe operations of your system have been communicated to necessary employees?	Yes / No	2
Total Points Available		58

2024 APGA SOAR Survey
Topic: Workforce Development

Question		Question Type	Maximum Points
Does your system have a policy concerning diversity in hiring practices?		Yes/ No	1
Has your system reviewed its policies to ensure inclusivity of all employees? Note: This could include a statement explicitly affirming your position on inclusivity or a reframing of existing policies, for example: family leave instead of maternity leave.		Yes/ No	1
Do employees from your system attend industry trade association meetings or events (remotely or in-person)? Note: Industry trade associations can be national, regional or state associations.		Yes / No	1
Are there employees from your system that participate (remotely or in-person) in an industry trade association committee?		Yes/ No	2
Does the system provide opportunities (for employees at all levels) to seek certifications, training, or other education that can advance them within their career path or outside their career path?	In the employee's career path only	Career Only = 1 Point Both inside & outside = 2 Points No opportunities provided = 0 Points	2
	Both inside and outside the employees career path		
	No opportunities are provided		
Do you encourage your employees to be active within your community? Note: This could include providing paid time off to participate in 501(c)(3) programs or employee payroll deductions for these organizations.		Yes/ No	1
Have written job descriptions been developed for all positions, describing the duties, responsibilities, required skills, training, knowledge and abilities of each position?		Yes/ No	1
Does your organization capture institutional knowledge (key decisions, informal and formal practices, unwritten rules, critical partnerships, etc.) to ensure its availability for current and future employees?		Yes/ No	2
Does your system provide employees with guidance on how to progress within their current position through experience and training? Note: These are sometimes called "Level Guides" or apprenticeship programs.		Yes/No	2
Describe how you ensure your employees receive the necessary specialized training needed to perform their roles: For example: Industry partnership (such as vendor and service provider trainings)		Open Ended Response [SOAR Task Group may award up to 1 Point]	1
Does the utility have a written plan that covers:	Retention	Yes/No	1
	Recruitment	Yes/No	1
Does the utility have a written formal succession plan?		Yes, covering all positions = 2 Points	2
When was the last time the succession plan was reviewed and, if necessary, updated?		Within the last year = 2 Points Within the last 2 years = 1.5 Points Within the last 3 years = 1 Points Has not been updated in last 3 years = 0 Points Not applicable - we have no succession plan = 0 Points	2

Does the utility have a formal written process to evaluate and advise employees of their performance at least annually?	Formal Written Performance Appraisals are Proved to the Employee on at least an Annual Basis = 2 Points Less Than an Annual Basis = 1 Point Formal Written Performance Appraisals are Not Performed = 0 Points	2
Does your system provide tools, resources, or programs to assist your employees' health and wellness outside of the workplace? <i>For example: Substance abuse programs, Wellness Programs, Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)</i>	Yes/ No	1
Did your system participate in the 2022 APGA Salary Survey?	Yes/ No	1
Total Points Available		24

2024 APGA SOAR Survey
Topic: System Improvement

Question	Question Type	Maximum Points
Has your utility evaluated the use of SCADA and/or telemetry	Yes / No	1
and/or implemented any of the following Geographic Information system (GIS)/Digital mapping technologies? (check all that apply)	Yes / No	1
<i>Note: Your system need not have implemented these technologies to respond "Yes". You are only required to have evaluated the potential costs and benefits of the technology.</i>		
Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) or /Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI)	Yes / No	1
Mobile workforce technology	Yes / No	1
Mobile leak detection	Yes / No	1
Corrosion Control Remote Monitoring	Yes / No	1
Laser Methane Leak Detection	Yes / No	1
Please describe one other technology not listed in the previous question that your system uses, has used in the past, or has evaluated. Your description must include how this technology is new or innovative for your system.	Open Ended Response [SOAR Task Group may award 1 Point]	1
Has your system implemented a meter change out program for ensuring meter accuracy?	Yes / No	1
Does your system utilize the actions identified in your Distribution Integrity Management Plan to drive your budget and/or manpower considerations?	Yes/No	3
Does your utility have a written process for reviewing inspection and maintenance records to determine the need to replace, repair, or monitor any portion of your distribution system? (i.e. implementation of actions identified in DIMP)	Yes/No	3
Do you (or a consultant on your behalf) utilize a network modeling software to perform capacity calculations for system planning? <i>Note: The utilization of the software should go beyond calculating pipe sizing.</i>	Yes/No	3
Do you know your operational cost of service for each customer group (residential, commercial, industrial) to ensure your rates are appropriately set? <i>Note: This question is asking systems whether they understand how much it costs them to serve each of their customer groups (costs associated with the operations, maintenance, overhead, etc.) so as to ensure they are appropriately setting rates for each customer group. This exercise can help systems understand if their rates (i.e. funding) can accommodate the costs to perform compliance activities and enable them constantly improve.</i>	Yes/No	3
Does your system contribute to gas industry research and development or participate in a technology pilot program? (Such as membership in the APGA Research Foundation)	Yes / No	1
Which of the following resources does your system utilize to stay abreast of current tools technology for gas distribution operations?	1. Membership in industry associations (national, regional, state). 2. Attendance at industry conferences or trade shows 3. Industry trade publications and magazines 4. Vendor Trainings or Seminars 5. Industry compliance tools (Windot)	More than 3 Tools = 2 Points 1-2 Tools = 1 Point No Tools = 0 Points 2
Has your system demonstrated its commitment to pipeline safety continuous improvement by using the framework provided in API RP 1173: Pipeline Safety Management Systems? <i>Note: This could be through an internal 'Commitment Statement' or the approval of resources, such as a job assignment or funding.</i>	Yes / No	1
Has your system compared its existing practices against those recommended in API RP 1173: Pipeline Safety Management Systems? <i>For example: the APGA Small Operator Gap Assessment or an equivalent.</i>	Yes / No	2
Has your system developed an action plan to address some (or all) of the gaps identified through your PSMS gap analysis? <i>Note: In the Plan-Do-Check-Adjust cycle, this is the "Do" phase.</i>	Yes / No	4

Has your identified Key Performance Measures for your PSMS implementation? For example:	Yes / No	1
Did your system complete the Industry PSMS Annual Survey distributed by APGA and the other trade associations each Fall? <i>Note: This is the 21-question survey that is utilized for developing industry metrics on voluntary adoption and for advocacy messaging.</i>	Yes / No	1
Describe two ways your system is reducing methane emissions? <i>See APGA Commitment to Environmental Stewardship</i>	Open Ended Response [SOAR Task Group may award 1 Point]	2
Does your system participate in EPA Methane Challenge or ONE Future?	Yes / No	0
Total Points Available		35