

**Comments by Elise Jones, Boulder County Commissioner, on the COGCC Flowline Rulemaking
Jan. 8, 2018**

Good morning. My name is Elise Jones and I'm a Boulder County Commissioner. Let me start by thanking you for your service and for taking the time to listen to all of us today.

The fatal home explosion in Firestone last April is more tragic evidence that oil and gas development is an intensive and dangerous industrial activity that can have serious and even deadly impacts, especially when it takes place near homes and in neighborhoods.

Since Firestone at least a dozen other explosions and fires have occurred along oil and gas pipelines in Colorado, including two that killed workers.

These accidents are another grim wake-up call that the rules in place today for flowlines and pipelines are not sufficient so the work that you're doing over the next two days is more than just important. It could literally be a matter of life and death for a Colorado resident or industry worker.

To state the obvious: tragedies like Firestone must not be allowed to ever happen again. Death cannot be a cost of doing business for the oil and gas industry. To prevent this, COGCC must take better responsibility for the infrastructure out there -- not just the wells themselves but the various lines, taps and equipment associated with them.

However, the rules, if adopted in their current form, are not protective enough of Coloradans' safety.

One of the major shortcomings in the COGCC's draft rule is its lack of a required flowline mapping program, which you'll hear more about later today from the Affiliated Local Governments group (of which Boulder County is a part).

A key role of local governments is land use planning. Without adequate information, such as the locations of pipelines and flowlines, we can't appropriately and safely plan in our communities or respond effectively in the case of emergencies.

To protect public safety, we need a mandatory statewide pipeline and flowline mapping database that's accessible to local governments and landowners.

The 8-1-1 system alone is not a sufficient substitute. We can't call 8-1-1 about our 25,000 acre agricultural open space portfolio and find out where there are old oil and gas flowlines over that entire area that may interfere with Ag operations or need removal.

When development proposals come before us, without mapping data we can't steer construction away from areas with high flowline intensity. Without knowing the specific locations of hazardous lines, we can't be prepared to respond if and when things go wrong.

I could go on with examples but the bottom line is that local governments can't help prevent future Firestones if we don't know where the potential risks are. COGCC must take on the responsibility of inventorying this critical information for us to access.

Please adopt the strongest possible rules to ensure that we truly have protected public safety. Think carefully about the State's inspection, monitoring and enforcement of these rules too so you can ensure their successful implementation.

And please take the local governments' requests seriously so we can honestly say to the families of Mark Martinez and Joey Irwin, never again.