

Transcript of Virginia Palacios testimony to the House Energy Resources Committee, September 14th

[00:00:00] Thanks for the opportunity this morning. Uh, my name is Virginia Palacios. I'm the founder and executive director of Commission Shift. Um, so as, as carbon dioxide pipelines are built out in both populated and rural areas of Texas, the legislature should ensure first, that carbon capture use and, and-- that the carbon capture use and storage industry funds local emergency responders with equipment and training.

Second, that there is oversight and public engagement before pipelines are constructed. And third, that there are pipeline safety rules specifically for carbon dioxide pipelines. I've experienced a gas gathering line leak on my ranch, and I know from personal experience it's not if there's a going to be a pipeline leak, but when and how bad.

Supercritical carbon dioxide pipelines carry an extra risk because the pipelines operate at high pressures, generally between 1,600 and 32-- or sorry, 2,300 PSI. A pipeline owned by [00:01:00] Denbury Gulf Coast Pipeline ruptured in 2020 along a roadway due to a landslide, and the pipeline not having been properly reinforced for soil movement.

When carbon dioxide is released, it sinks and can displace oxygen in air. The plume of CO₂ that formed over the roadway caused vehicles' internal combustion engines to shut off, and people were stuck in the plume without the ability to breathe. They were convulsing and foaming at the mouth, and 45 people went to the hospital with symptoms of hypoxia.

Some of the victims still have chronic short-term memory loss. First responders used oxygen tanks to reach the victims but faced delays because none of the first responders knew what kind of gas was coming from the pipeline. Their vehicles stalled at the site. In Texas, we must ensure that first responders get training, electric vehicles, and oxygen tanks funded by the CCUS industry.

Next, there is no agency [00:02:00] in Texas that oversees pipeline siting or locating in Texas. Community members in Cheek, Texas have pointed out that new CO₂ pipelines nearby are planned for areas that typically flood and experience subsidence. There's no formal mechanism for them to communicate these risks to the company or for a state agency to review mitigation measures.

Giving the Railroad Commission jurisdiction to review pipeline siting and accept public feedback before construction could prevent hospitalizations when

CO₂ pipelines fail. And finally, there are no pipeline safety rules for supercritical CO₂ pipelines in Texas or federally. Carbon dioxide pipelines carrying high-pressure CO₂ from industrial sources bring additional risks that need to be addressed in regulations, including likelihood of ductile fractures, corrosion from free water, and potential for hydrogen sulfide to speed corrosion if it's in the CO₂ stream.[00:03:00]

Texas needs a carbon dioxide regulatory framework that prioritizes public safety, not one that waives industry liability. Thank you.