

Enbridge pumping stations not up to code: NEB



By Vincent McDermott
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A storage tank looms over a freeway at the Enbridge Edmonton terminal in Edmonton in this 2012 file photo. Dan Riedlhuber/Reuters

The National Energy Board is warning Calgary-based Enbridge Inc. that 117 pumping stations do not meet federal safety standards, and the company has until April 15 to create a corrective action plan.

According to government documents, inspectors from the federal government inspected pipeline terminals in Edmonton, Westover and Sarnia in 2011. Investigators discovered insufficient emergency shut-down systems and emergency back-up power generators in the event of an accident.

Pumping stations provide power to move liquids such as crude oil or diluted bitumen through a pipeline network.

As a response, Enbridge promised to address the problem by October 2012. When the deadline approached, however, the company sent the NEB a letter stating it needed more time to develop an appropriate action plan. In a letter dated March 15, the company was granted an extension to April 15.

"The Board finds that the extension to 15 April 2013 requested by Enbridge to develop a complete corrective action plan for its operating pump stations is acceptable, considering the magnitude of the work required to address the non-compliances," the letter states. "Enbridge indicated that further study was required ... to ensure that the implementation of any given solution will not result in residual risks."

So far, the company has not been fined for failing to meet safety regulations over the incident.

This is not the first time Enbridge's vast pipeline network has been criticized. In June, a company pumping station northeast of Edmonton spilled 230,000 litres of crude oil into a nearby field. The compound did not enter any waterways.

In the United States, the company has been criticized for a 2010 pipeline rupture spilling 20,000 barrels of diluted bitumen into the Kalamazoo River, located halfway between Detroit and Lake Michigan. It cost \$1 billion to clean up.

The company is also seeking federal approval to build a 1,177 kilometre pipeline carrying 193,000 barrels of Albertan crude oil to tankers bound for oil-thirsty markets in Asia.

The only hurdle standing in Enbridge's way is fierce local opposition, mostly from environmental groups and several aboriginal communities.

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