Four-Year Review of Atmos Energy Corporation's Pipeline Safety Public Awareness Program for the Period from June 2019, to June 2022 (RP 1162 Plan Years 13, 14, 15 and 16)

2022 PUBLIC AWARENESS REVIEW

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Four-Year Review of Atmos Energy Corporation's Pipeline Safety Public Awareness Program for the Period from June 2019, to June 2022 (RP 1162 Plan Years 13, 14, 15 and 16)

GENERAL

Pipeline Safety, in coordination with Corporate Communications, met on May 9, 2022 to assess and review Atmos Energy Corporation's Pipeline Safety Public Awareness Program for the Plan Years 13 through 16. During this review, the team considered information for Plan Years 13 through 16 including stakeholder survey assessment data and reports, annual self-assessments, supplemental communications, and program process improvements. The four Identified Stakeholder Audiences in areas we operate are: the Affected Public, Public Officials, Emergency Response Officials, and Excavators. The review included the Atmos Energy Corporation Key Messages and the effectiveness of these messages to the four Identified Stakeholder Audiences:

- Pipeline purpose and reliability
- Awareness of hazards and prevention measures, including cross bores
- Emergency preparedness
- How to recognize and respond to a leak
- How to report a natural gas release or incident
- One-Call notification requirements
- Right-of-way encroachment
- Pipeline location information available in the National Pipeline Mapping System (NPMS)
- How to obtain additional safety information and how to contact Atmos Energy

Upon completion of the review, the following findings and recommendations were determined:

Affected Public

- There was significant improvement in reaching the Affected Public about pipeline safety and providing information about what to do in a pipeline emergency.
- Overall survey findings indicate a strong understanding of who to call in the case of a gas leak.
- With respect to our radio messaging effectiveness, Atmos Energy will continue to evaluate communications to the Affected Public.

Public Officials

- Overall awareness of pipelines remains high. Awareness is relatively stable with 2018. Public Officials continue to show a significant higher awareness then School Officials.
- Methodology on messaging is statistically sound for the overall group. There may be an opportunity to improve school official awareness through increased messaging.
- Continued efforts by our managers of public affairs, along with the mailed communications to Public Officials, may enhance the effectiveness of our robust public messaging efforts.
- Preferred method of receiving communication is via email followed closely by direct mail.

Emergency Officials

- Survey results for all messaging were very strong and demonstrate the success of utilizing our liaison program and communications.
- Review of the program indicates we are effectively communicating our key messages to this stakeholder group.
- Preferred method of receiving communication is via email or internet.

Excavators

- Survey results were very high for utilizing the 811 services, identifying the signs of a natural gas leak, and emergency procedures if a natural gas leak is suspected.
- Review of the program indicates we are effectively communicating our key messages to this stakeholder group.
- Preferred method of receiving communication is via email or internet.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Affected Public

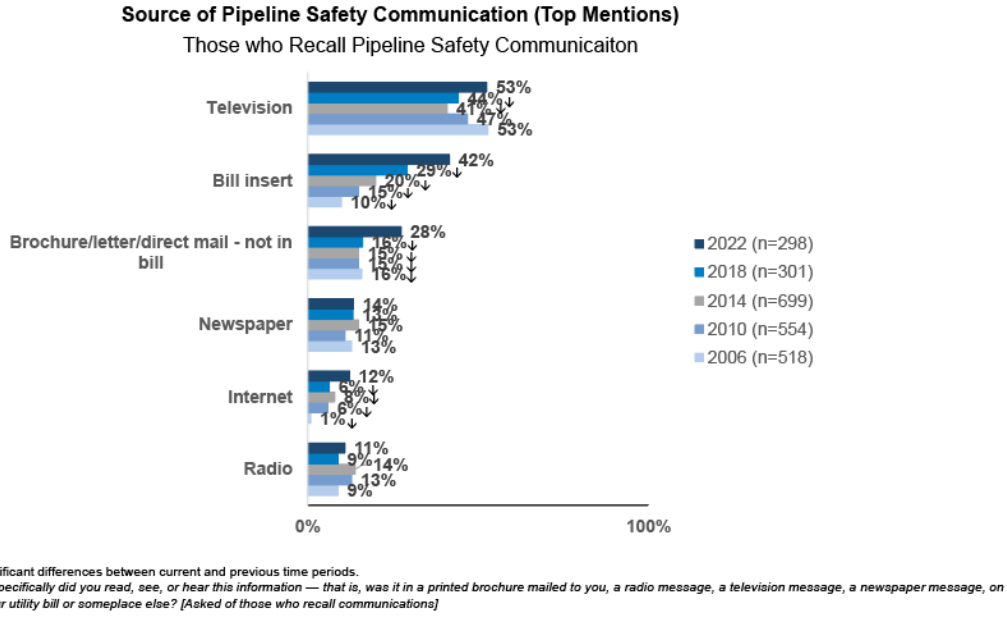
- Survey Methodology

Atmos Energy Corporation surveyed the Affected Public in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022. The 2022 review survey was conducted by telephone interviews between January 14 and February 28, 2022. The average survey lasted approximately 13 minutes and included both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Respondents were selected from the general public among heads of household 18 years of age and older. A total of 1,000 surveys were completed with a margin of error of +/-3.1 at a 95% confidence level.

		Completed Interviews by Region									
	Year	CO	KS	LA	MS	KY	TN	VA	Mid-Tex	WTX	Total
Atmos Energy	2006	156	144	310	306	300	230	37	316	300	2,099
	2010	111	189	300	300	300	185	55	300	300	2,040
	2014	300	301	300	300	300	300	301	300	300	2,702
	2018	111	111	111	111	111	111	111	112	111	1,000
	2022	111	111	111	111	111	111	111	112	111	1,000

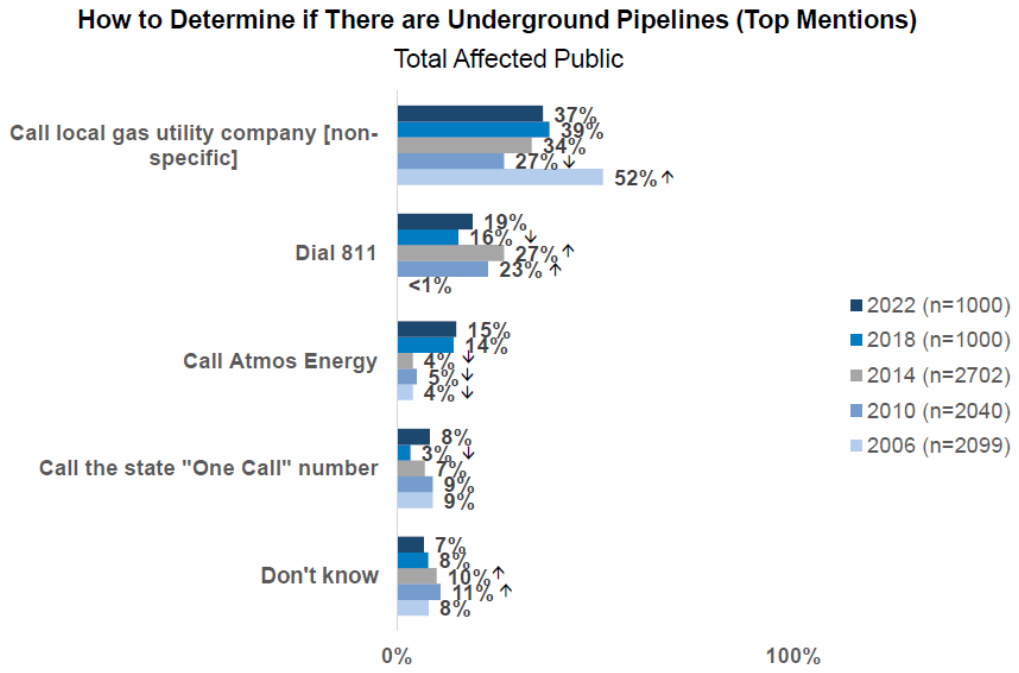
- Survey Findings

The survey shows that, for residents who recall the pipeline safety communication, television remains the most cited source at 53%. Bill inserts are up significantly from prior time periods at 42%. Radio spots mentions continue to be steady with our 2006 baseline of 9% and actually indicate an increase to 11%. This indicates that our radio message frequency and penetration continue to remain effective. Atmos Energy will continue to evaluate the methodologies used to provide messaging to the Affected Public.

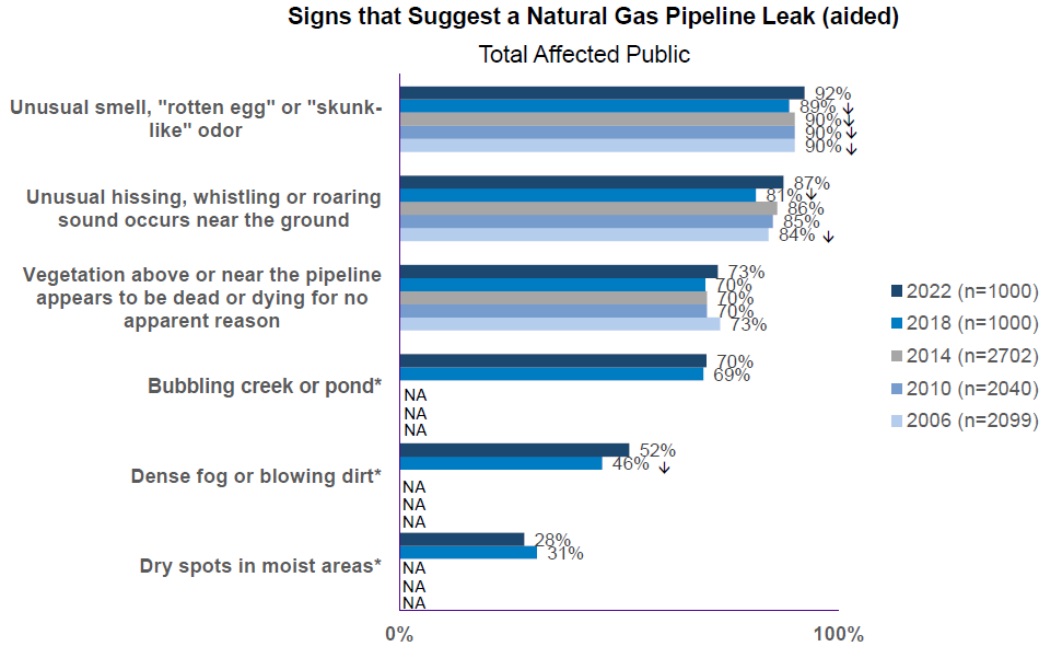


↓↑ Indicates significant differences between current and previous time periods.
Q14. And where specifically did you read, see, or hear this information — that is, was it in a printed brochure mailed to you, a radio message, a television message, a newspaper message, on the Internet, in your utility bill or someplace else? [Asked of those who recall communications]

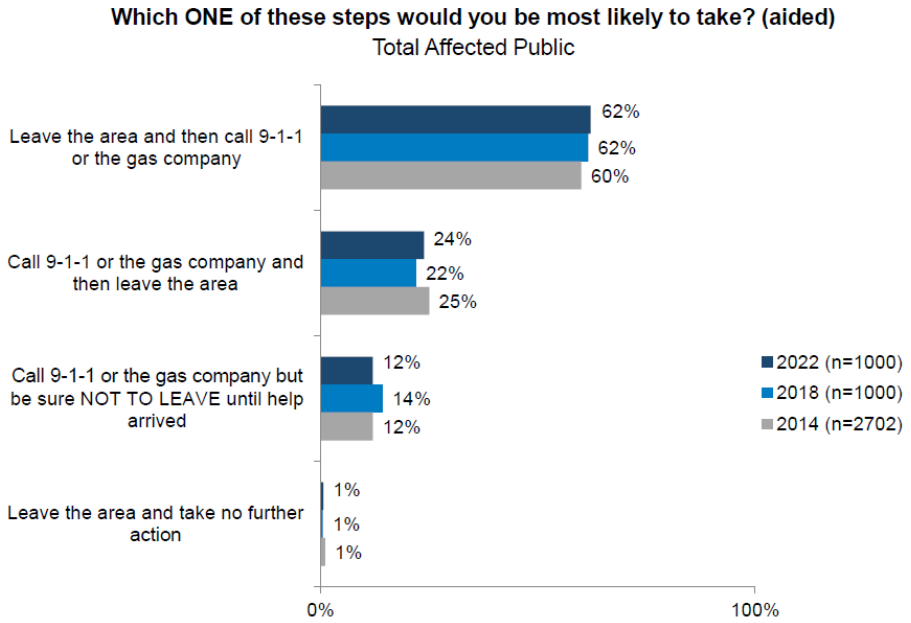
The survey continues to show that the 37% of the public would call the local gas utility over calling 811 to identify underground pipelines or buried utilities.



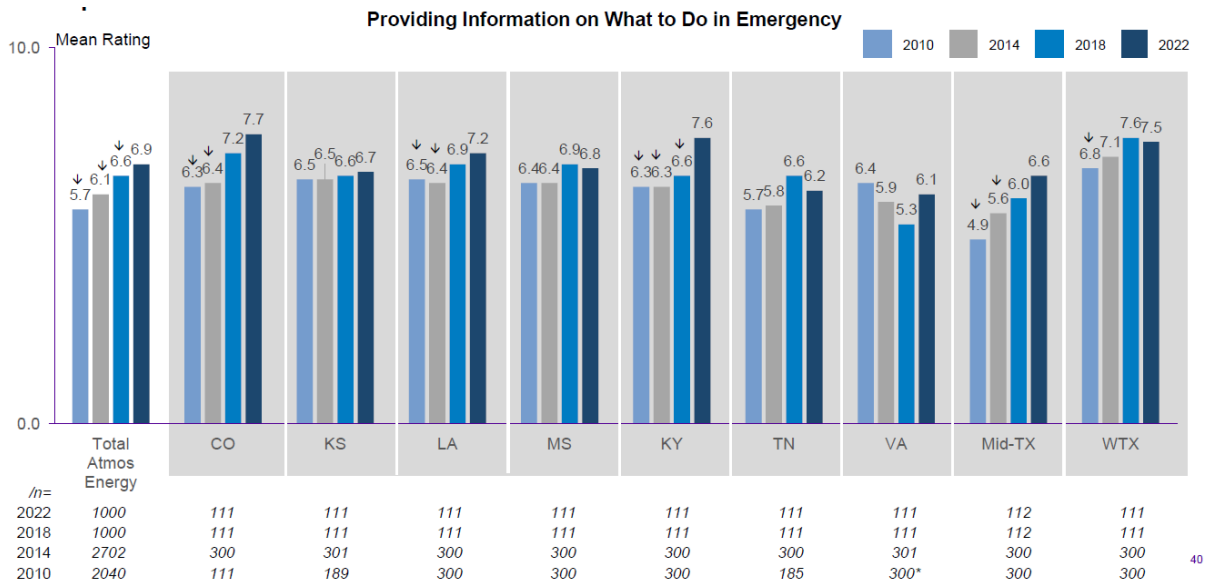
When asked about signs that would suggest a natural gas leak aided by the surveyor, over 90% of participants mentioned smell ("rotten egg" or "skunk like" odor) followed by 87% of participants mentioning unusual hissing, whistling, or roaring sound occurring near the ground.



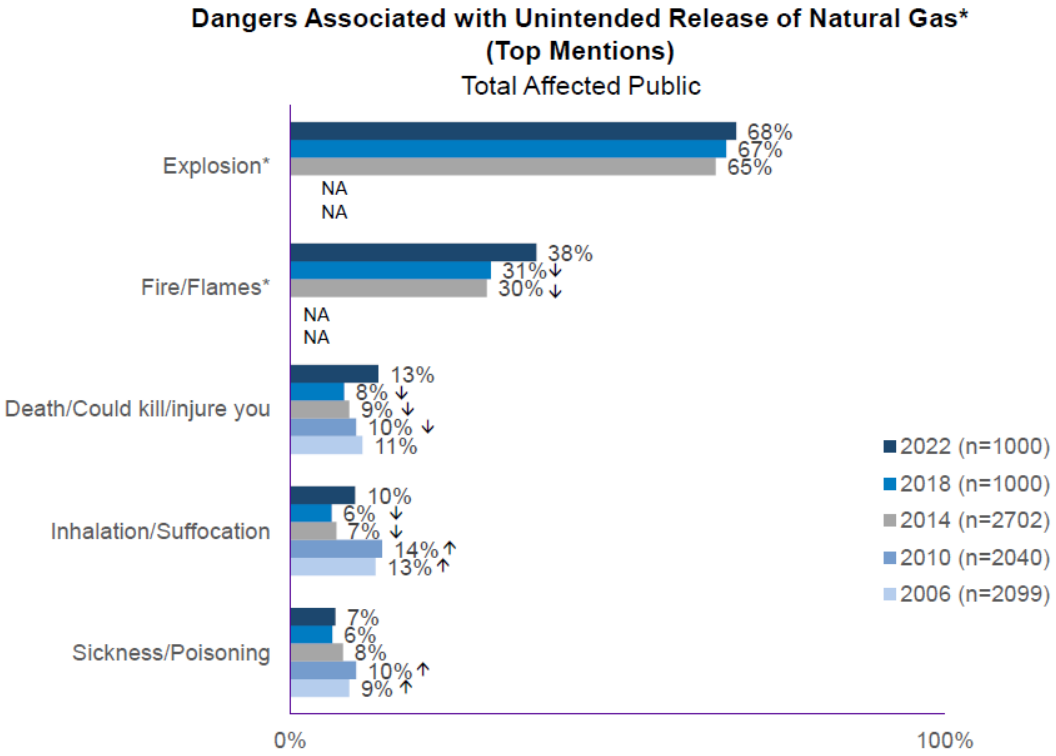
Consistent with 2018, when aided, 62% indicated that they would leave the area then call 911 or the gas company if they suspected a leak. The overall survey indicates a strong understanding of who to call in the case of a gas leak as exemplified with consistent results over the past surveys.



There has been an increase since 2014 in the public's ratings with the information that Atmos Energy provides concerning pipeline emergencies.



When asked about the dangers associated with a gas leak, the public mostly identifies explosions at 68% followed by fire/flames at 38%. The study also shows an increase in the awareness that a gas leak could cause poisoning, suffocation, or injury/death.



*In 2006 and 2010 the response option was Explosion/Flames. Beginning in 2014 responses indicating explosion or fire/flames were kept separate.
↓↑ Indicates significant differences between current and previous time periods.
Q2A. As far as you know, what would be the danger associated with an unintended release of natural gas from a pipeline?

Public Officials

- Survey Methodology

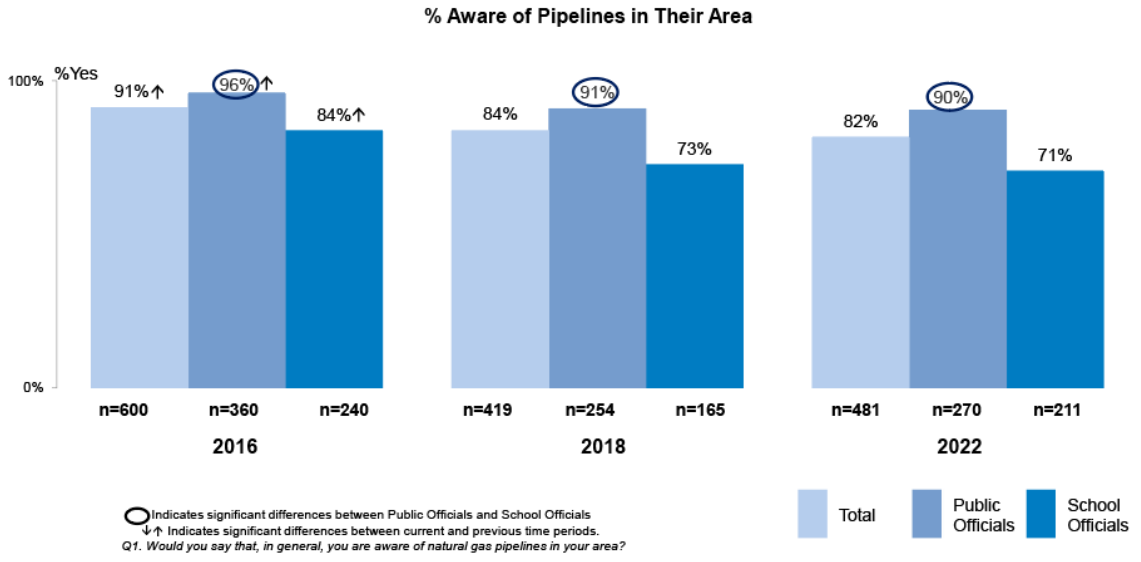
  Telephone and online interviews were conducted between January 18 to February 27, 2022. A total of 481 surveys (151 phone and 330 web) were conducted. Of these, 270 were surveys from Public Officials, and 211 were surveys from School Officials. The survey averaged about 15 minutes in length and contained both open-end and closed-end questions. Of the 481 surveys completed, the margin of error is about +/-4.4 at a 95% confidence level.

- Survey Findings

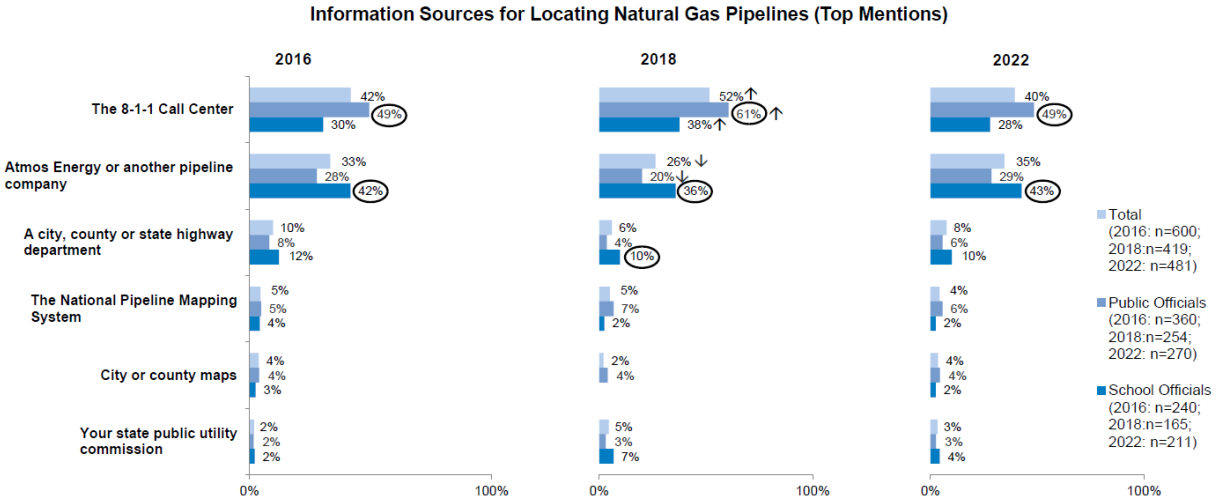
  Steady with the 2018 results, the survey reveals that 9 out of 10 Public Officials indicated that they are aware of pipelines in their area. The same awareness among School Officials is lower at 71%. Less than one third of the Public and School Officials surveyed indicated that they pay close attention to the safety messages. Email continues to be the preferred method to receive information.

  About half of the Public Officials say that have received safety information about natural gas pipelines, while only three in ten School Officials indicated that they received information. Most School Officials (70%) indicate that the safety information they received came from a letter or mailing from Atmos Energy, whereas 49% and 44% Public Officials indicate they received the safety information via letter (49%) or brochure (44%), respectively, from Atmos Energy.

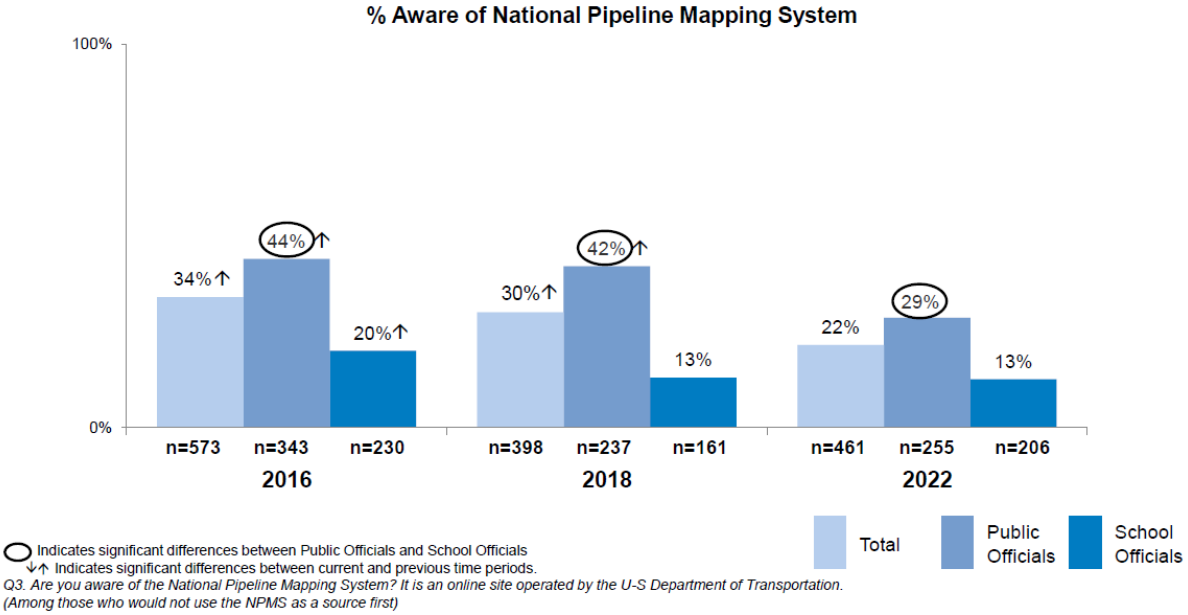
  Overall awareness of pipelines in their areas remains high. Awareness is relatively stable with 2018, with Public Officials showing a higher awareness then School Officials.



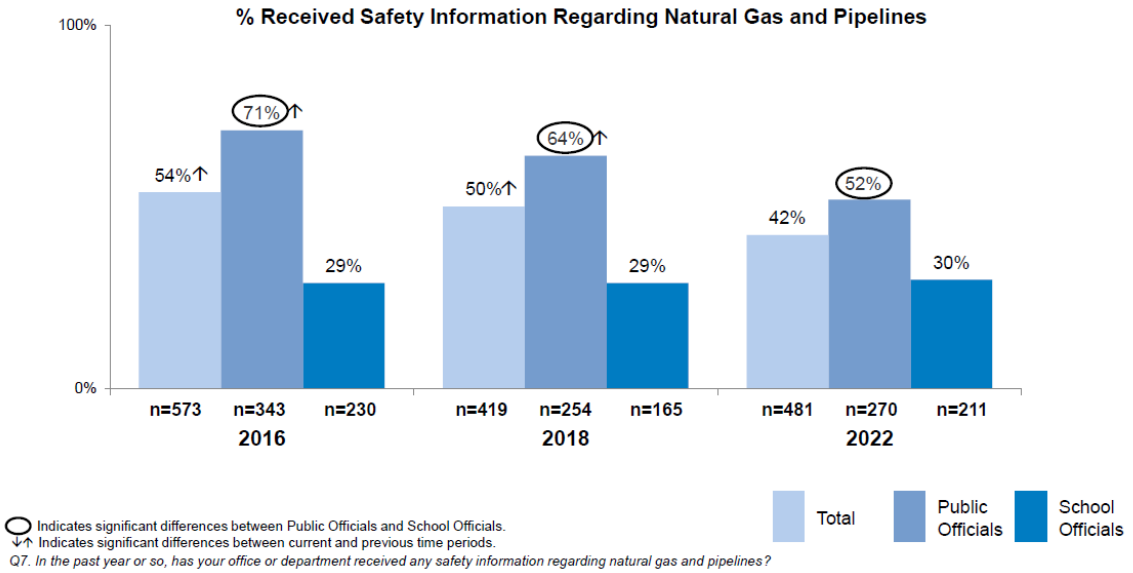
Furthermore, the percentage of officials mentioning the 811 Call Center as a source for information on pipelines decreased. However, the percentage of officials mentioning Atmos Energy or another pipeline company as a source for information on pipelines rose to 35%.



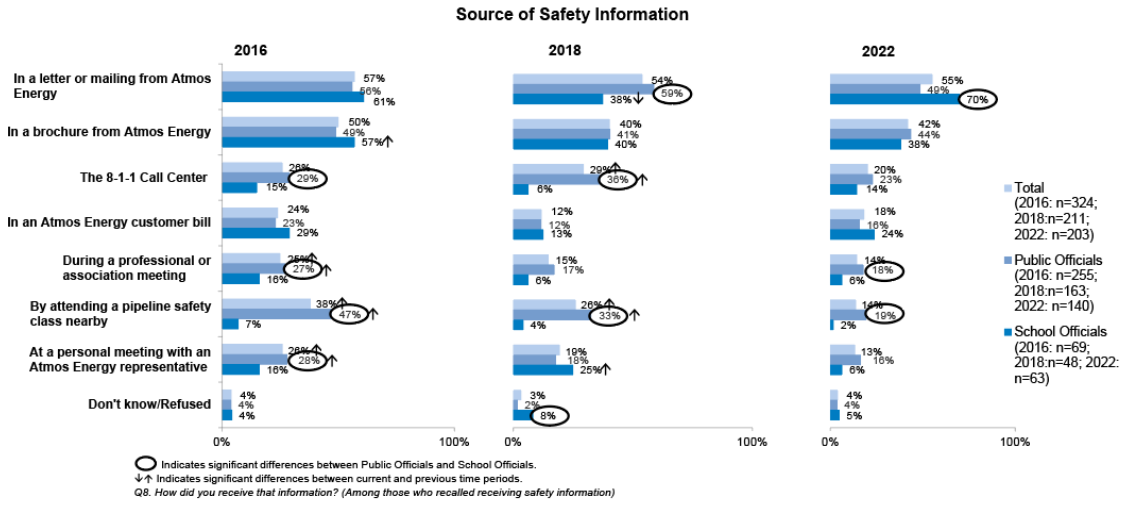
Awareness of the National Pipeline Mapping System (NPMS) among Public Officials and School Officials declined, with School Officials' awareness remaining lower than that of Public Officials.



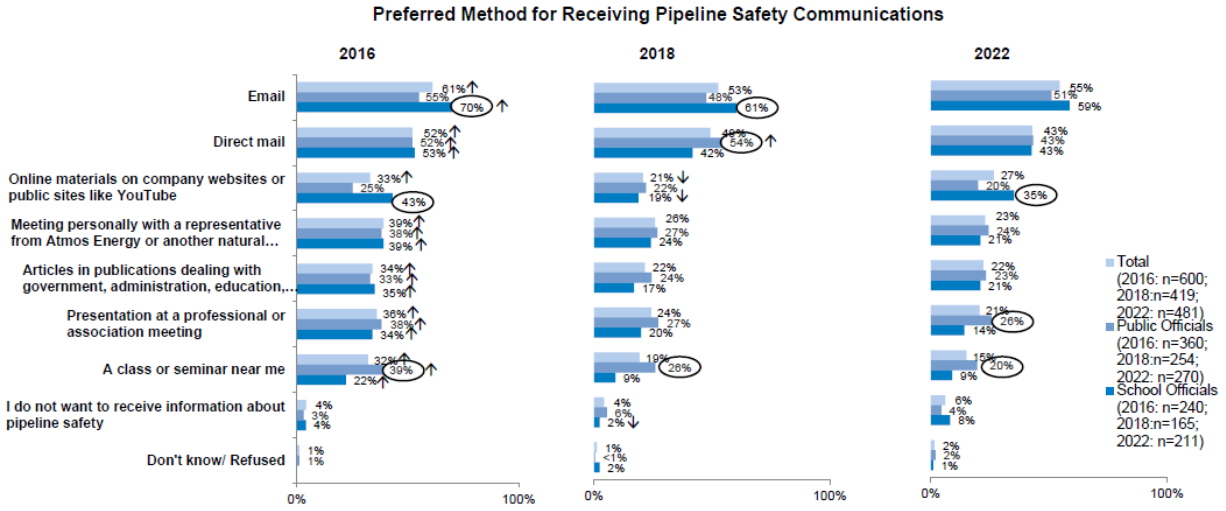
Approximately four out of ten officials recalled receiving pipeline safety information, which is less than the results from the 2016 and 2018. Public Officials continued to indicate that they recalled receiving this information at a higher mark than School Officials.



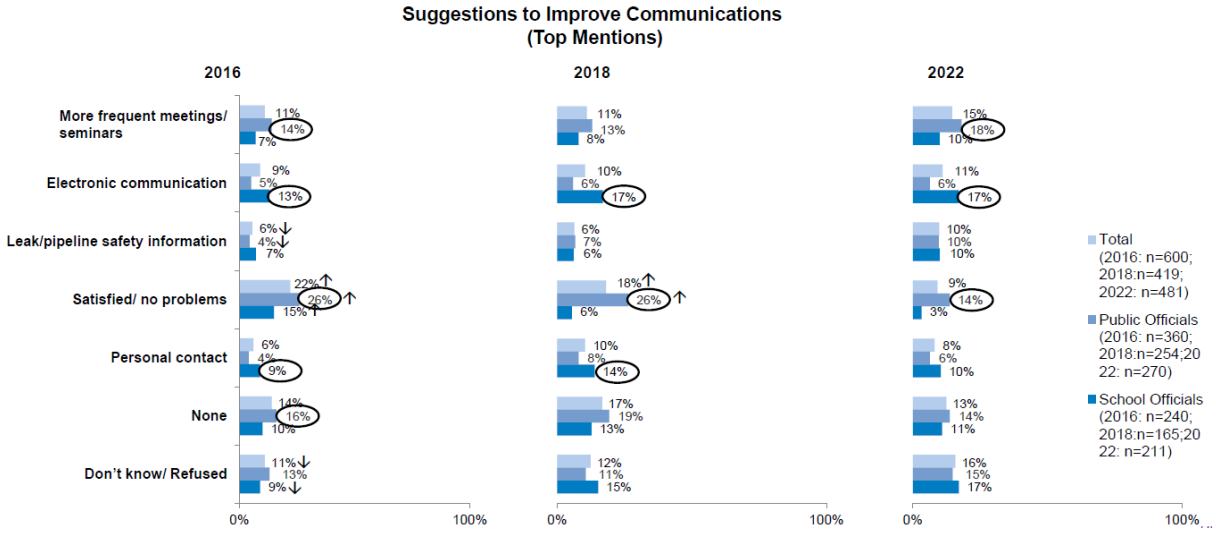
Among those who recall receiving safety information, more than half recall letters or mailings from Atmos Energy, with School Officials indicating receipt of these materials at a significantly higher level than in 2018, and at a higher level than Public Officials. Together, fewer officials recall receiving information from the 811-call center or by attending a pipeline safety class as compared to 2018.



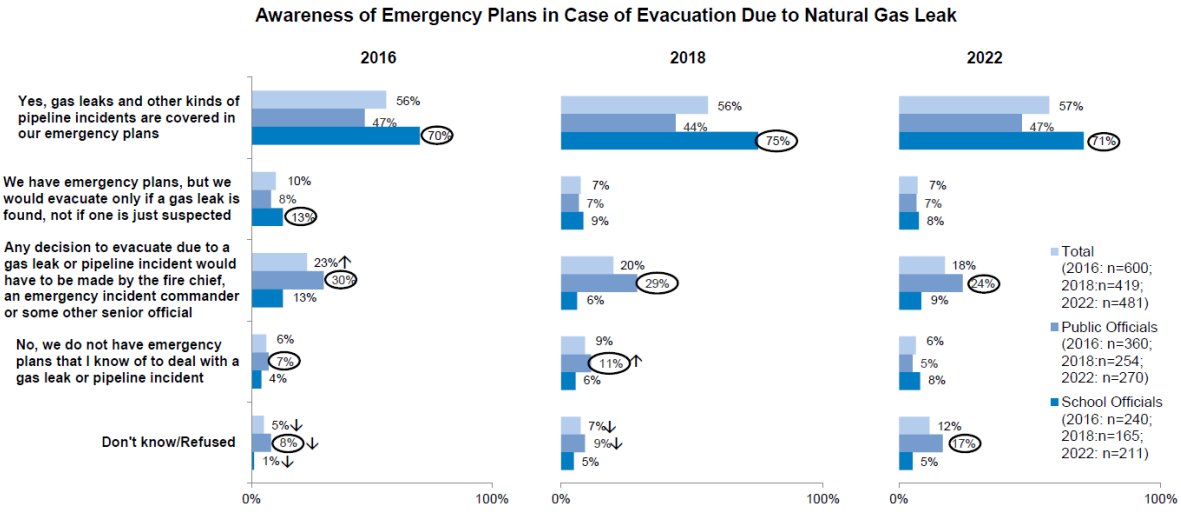
As mentioned previously, email continues to be the most preferred method to receive pipeline safety communications followed relatively closely by direct mail.



Of those officials who provided specific ways to improve natural gas safety communications, more frequent meetings/seminars was a top mention among Public Officials, while School Officials were most likely to mention electronic communications.



Nearly six in ten officials are aware of emergency plans to evacuate in case of a natural gas leak, with the results being higher for School Officials. Public Officials are more likely to cite that the decisions to evacuate lies with the fire department as compared to School Officials.



Emergency Officials/First Responders

- Survey Methodology

  In order to better gauge public awareness efforts, Atmos Energy began surveying Emergency Officials/First Responders with its 2018 review. The 2018 results are used as a baseline for future 4 Year Reviews. Three hundred Emergency Officials/First Responders were surveyed by telephone between January 17, 2022, and February 8, 2022. The surveys averaged 12.6 minutes in length and contained both open-end and closed-end questions. There is a margin of error of +/-5.4 at a 95% confidence level.

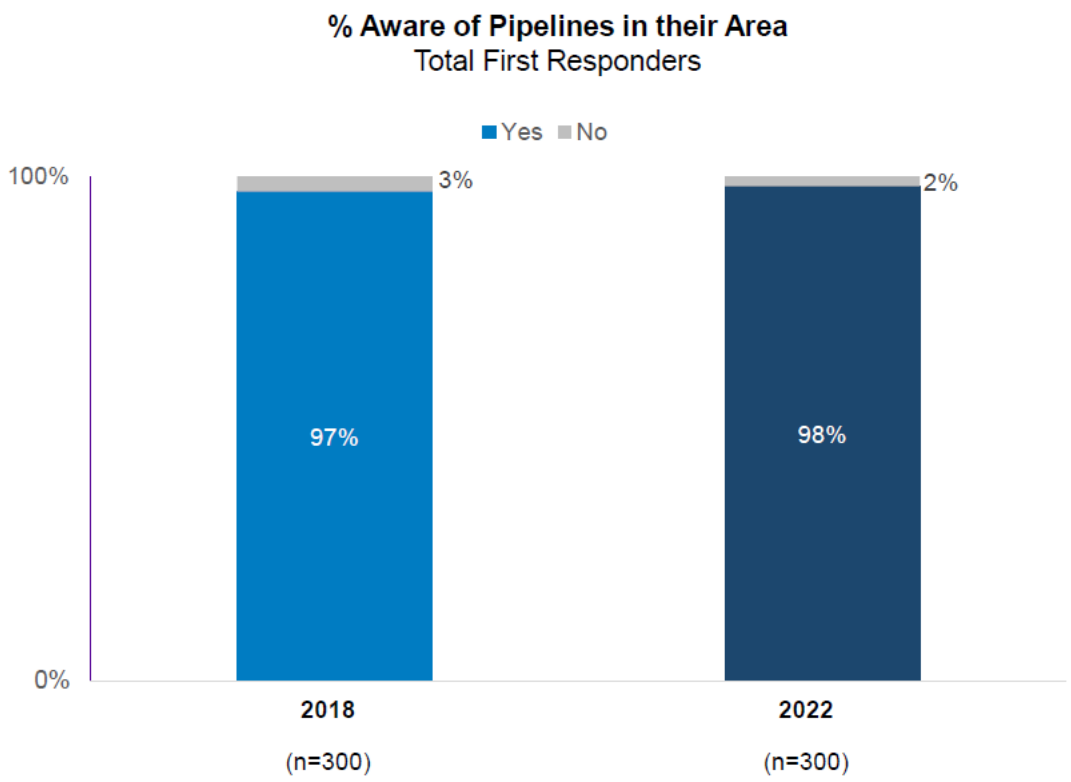
- Survey Findings

  Consistent with 2018, virtually all First Responders are aware of pipelines in their area. Nearly four in ten could call 811 first to determine the locations of any pipeline in their areas.

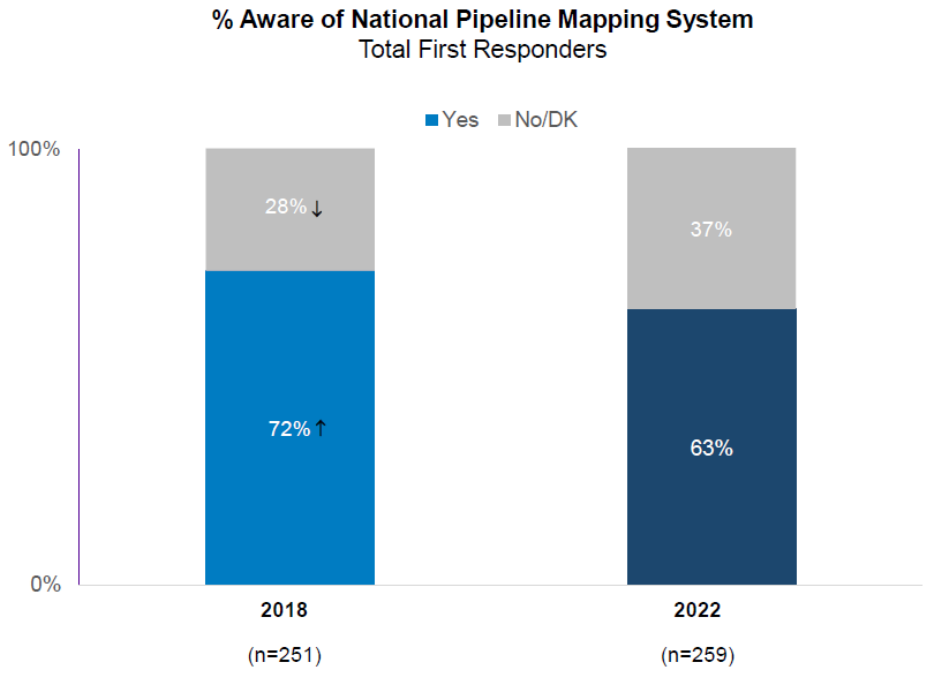
  Seven in ten First Responders indicated that they have received natural gas safety information in the past year, which is lower than 2018. Mentions of personal contact from Atmos Energy are also down from 2018, which is likely attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic.

  Unsafe digging continues to be the most mentioned cause of damage to underground pipelines. Most First Responders indicated that the rotten egg or skunk like smell is a sign of a gas leak, and mentions are up when compared to 2018.

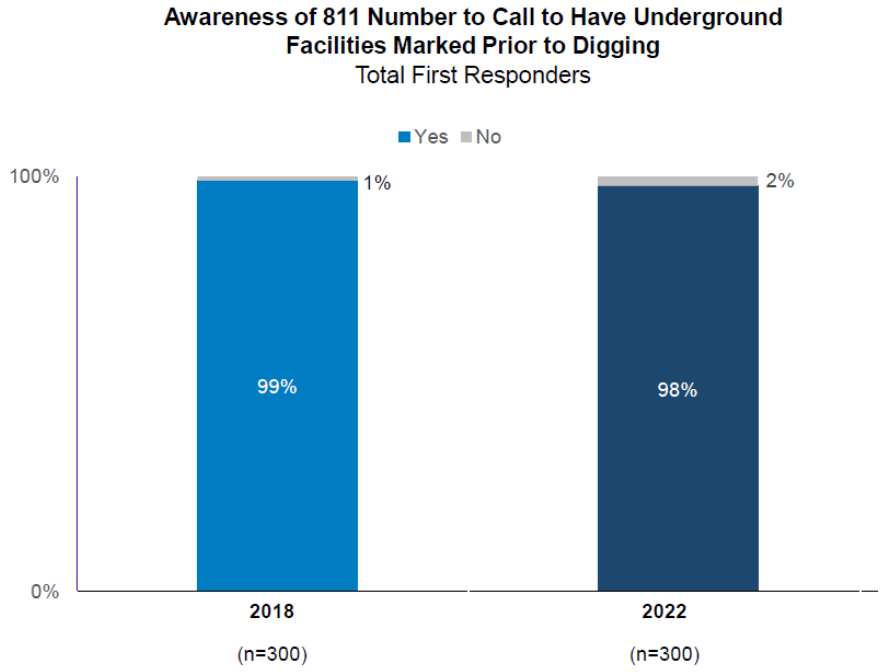
  Of those who gave suggestions for improving communications about gas safety, First Responders' top mentions include increased contact/communication and additional training. The most preferred method for receiving safety communications is via email/online.



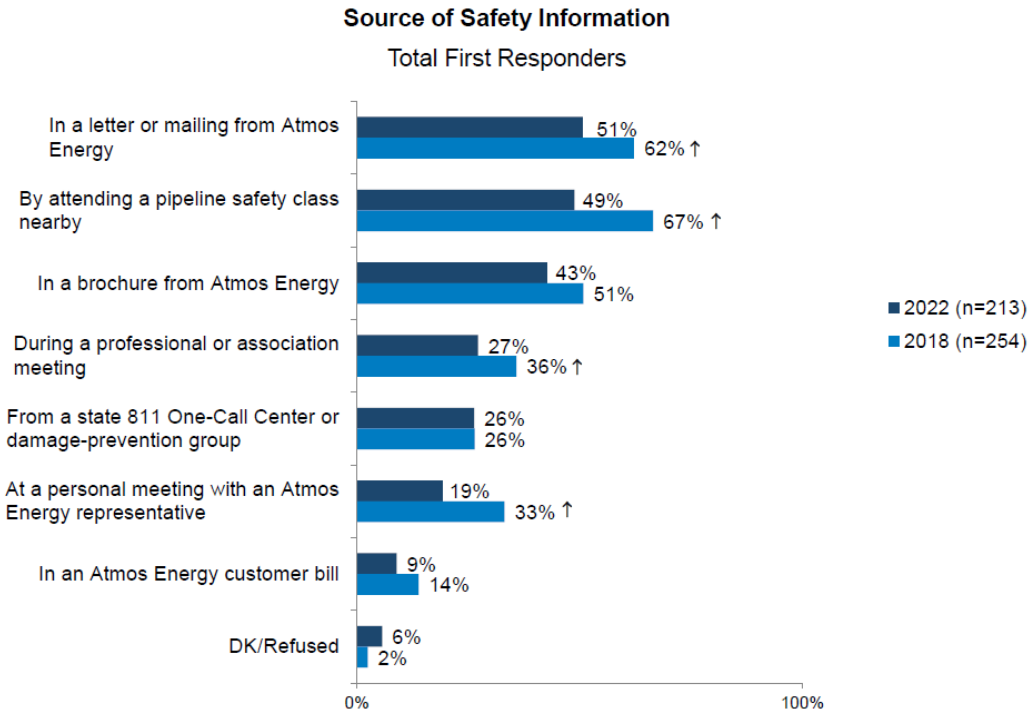
When directly asked about the National Pipeline Mapping System (NPMS), 63% of respondents indicated that they are aware of it, which is down from 2018. When combining both prompted and unprompted mentions of the NPMS, approximately three in four First Responders indicated that they are aware of the system.

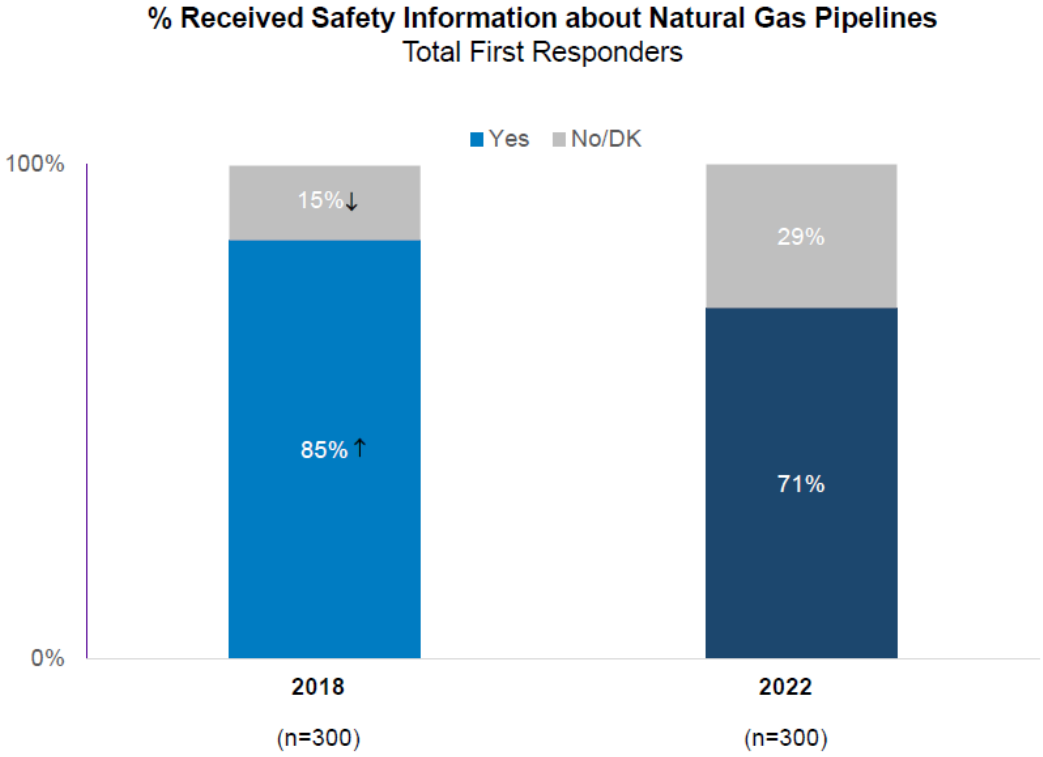


Consistent with 2018, virtually all First Responders indicated that they are aware of 811.

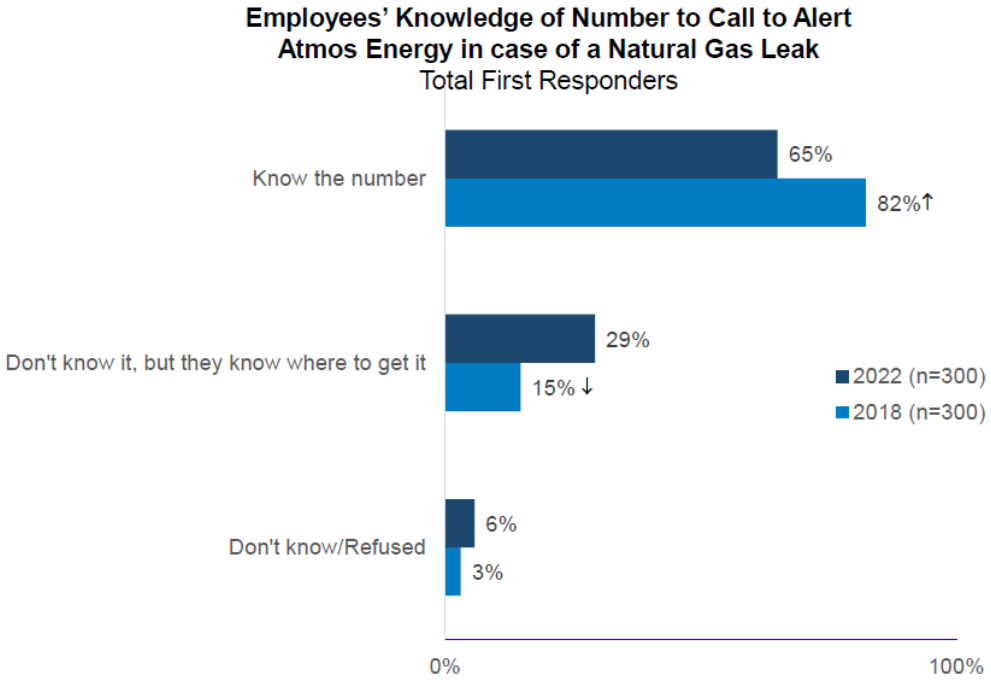


When questioned about receiving messaging about gas pipelines, of those who indicated that they received this information, 51% recalled the Atmos Energy mailing or attending a safety class. 71% of First Responders indicated that they received natural gas safety information in the past year, which is down from 2018.

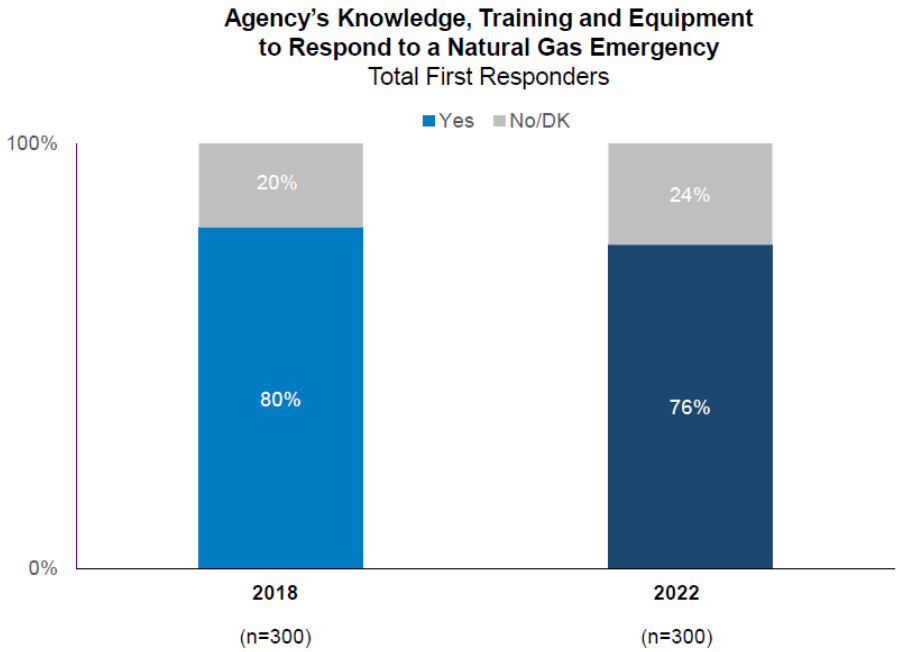




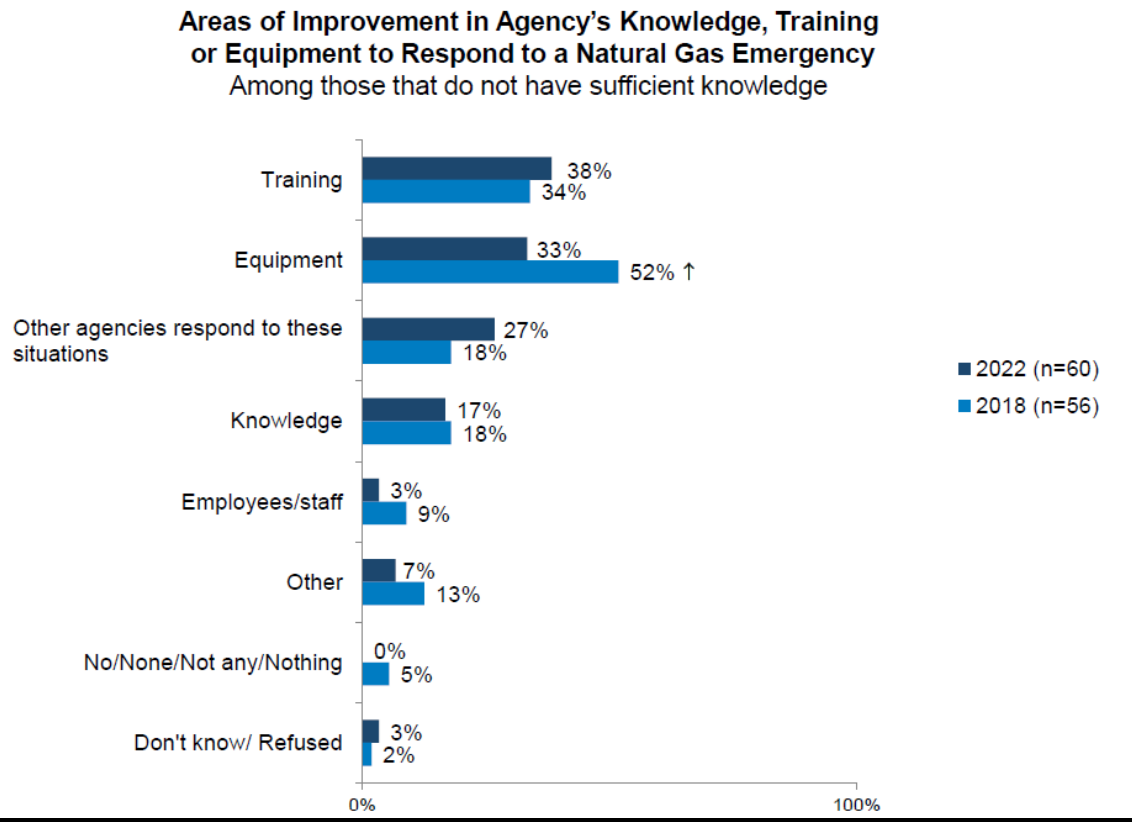
When asked if they knew the number to call in order to notify Atmos Energy of a gas leak, 65% responded that they know the number. Approximately 29% of respondents indicated that, while they may not know the number offhand, they do know where to obtain that number.



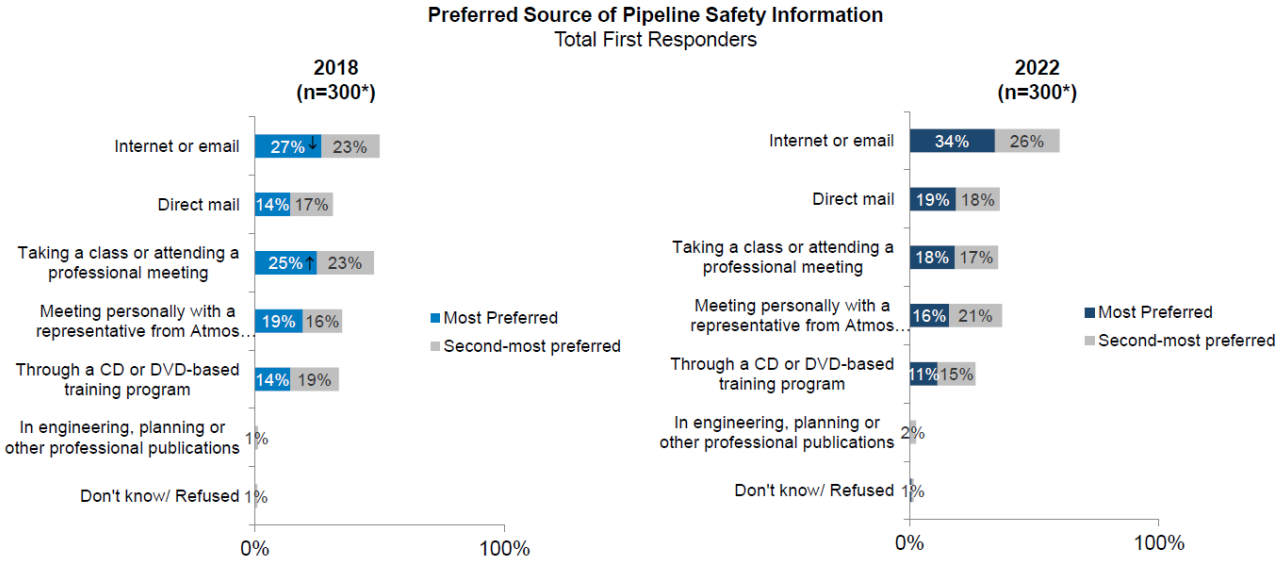
About three in four First Responders indicated that their agency has sufficient knowledge, training, and equipment to respond to a natural gas emergency.



Of those indicating some degree of lacking on how to respond to a natural gas emergency, 38% of respondents indicated that they needed training. Those indicating they needed equipment is lower when compared to 2018.



When asked what the most preferred method way of receiving pipeline safety information, those respondents indicating via internet or email rose from 2018. Those indicating taking a class or attending a professional meeting declined.



Excavators

- Survey Methodology

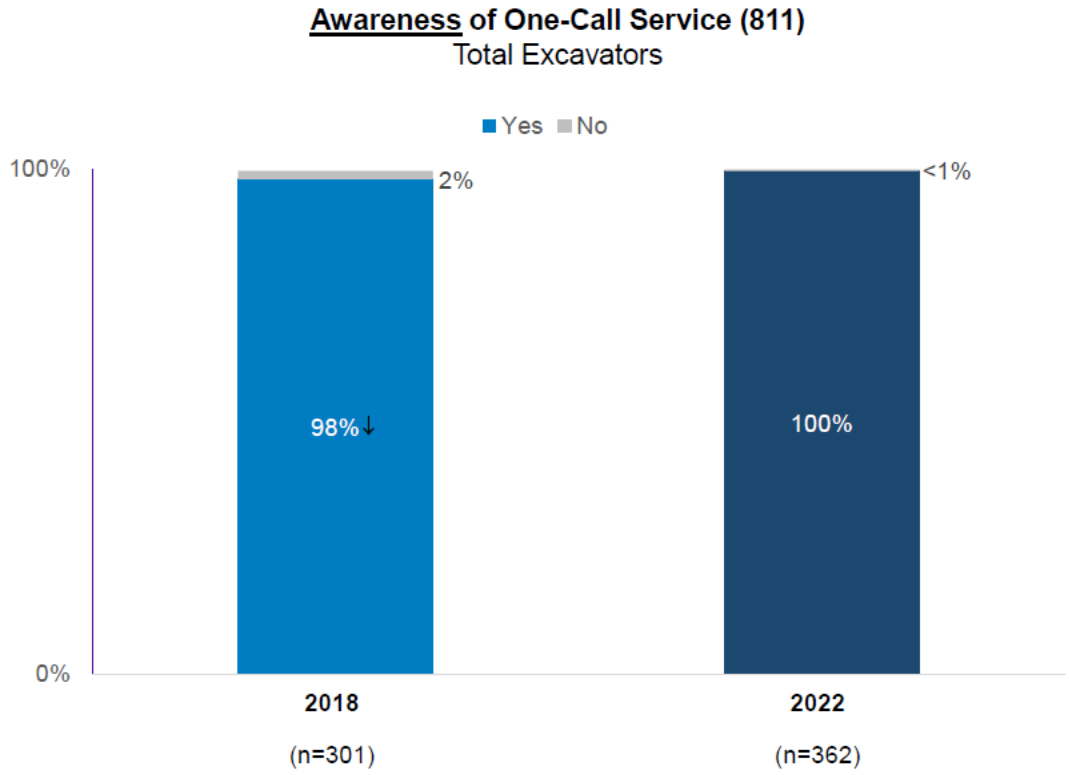
  A total of 362 Excavators were surveyed online between January 19, 2022, and February 6, 2022. The surveys averaged approximately 15 minutes in length and contained both open-end and close-end questions. The margin of error for the completed interviews is about +/-5.1% at a 95% confidence level.

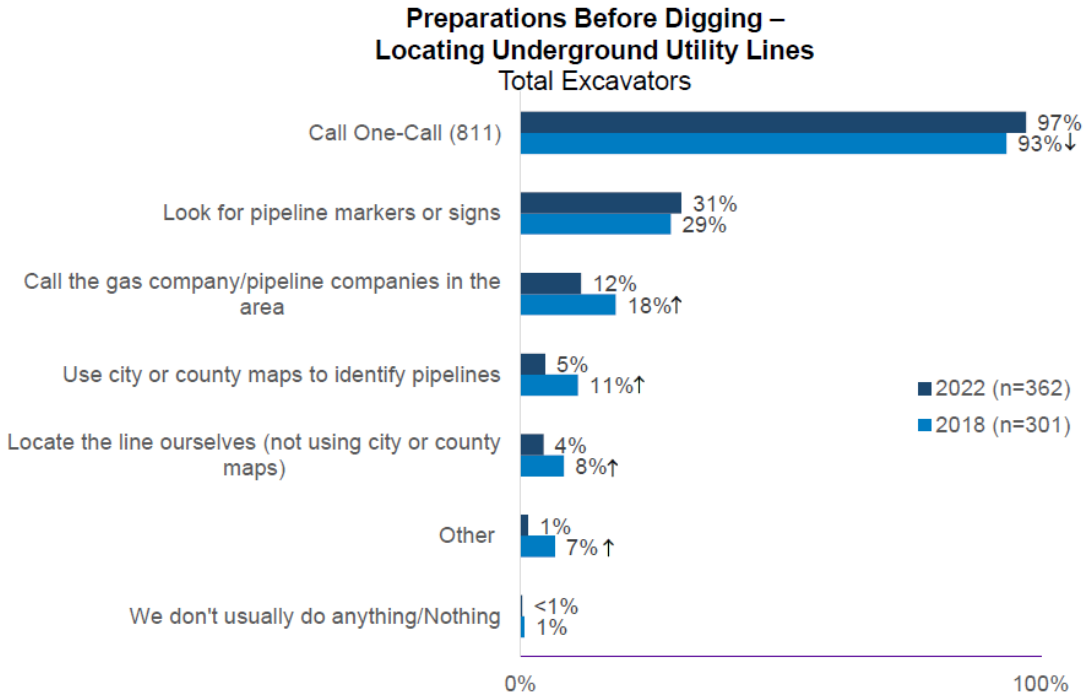
- Survey Findings

  Virtually all Excavators indicated awareness of the 811 service, up slightly from 2018. In addition, 97% of Excavators reported that would call 811 before starting an excavation project, a significant improvement from 2018.

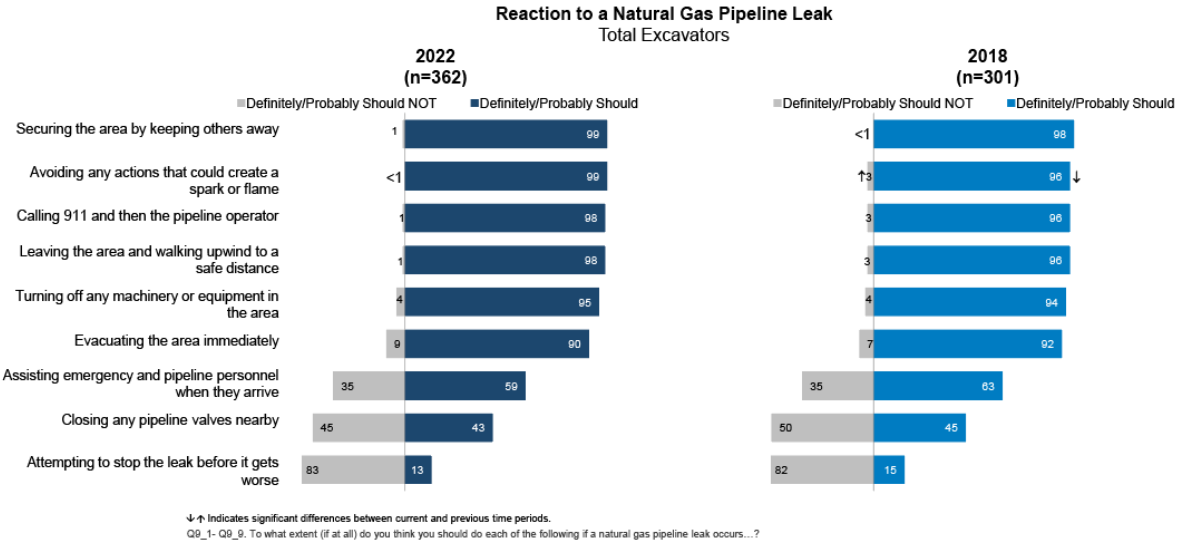
  The survey results indicate that the characteristic rotten egg odor and hissing/roaring sound are the two most recognized signs of a leak by Excavators. These are closely followed by dirt blowing and bubbles in standing waters.

  Over one-half of Excavators indicated that they received gas safety communications via email, an increase from 2018. The internet is the second most citied source for receiving safety communications. Of those Excavators who provided suggestions on how to improve safety communications, improving marking/locating services was most mentioned followed by being satisfied with current communications.

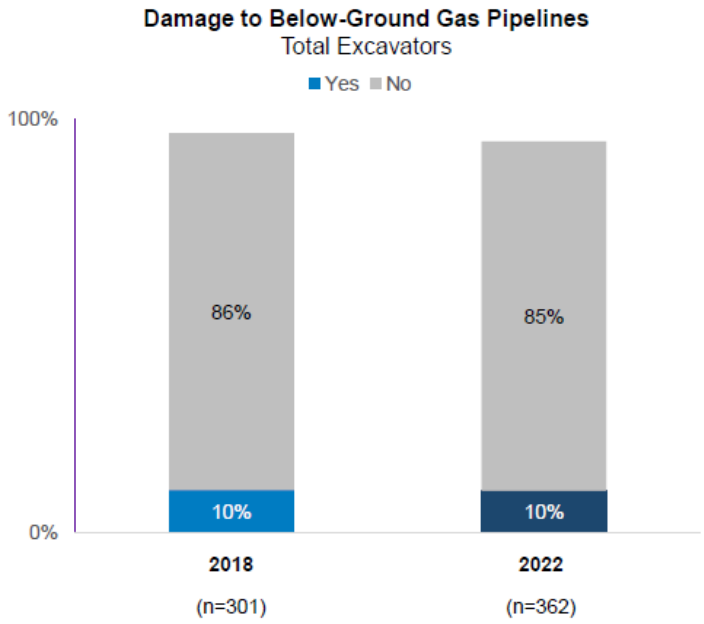




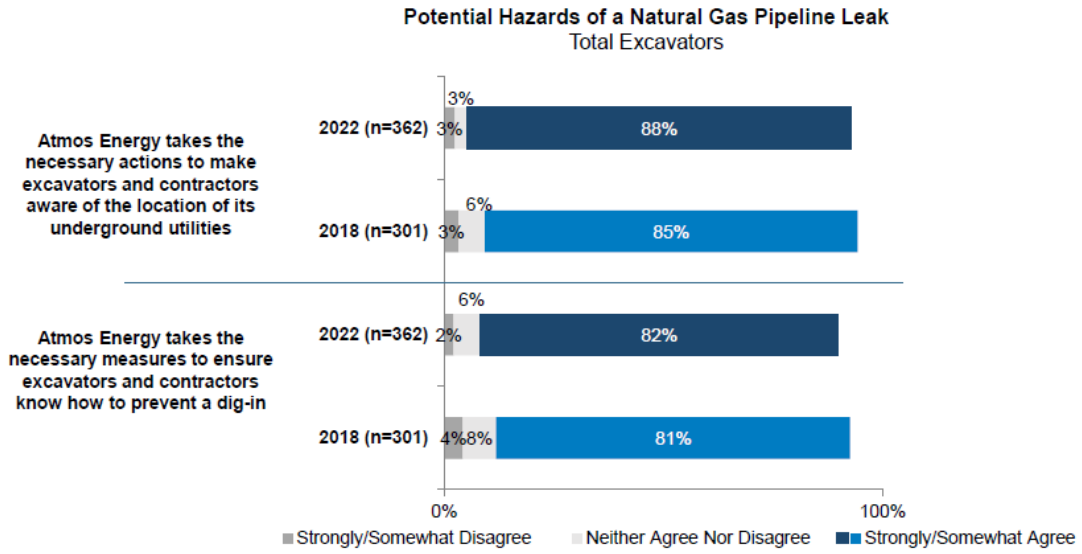
When asked about reactions to a suspected gas leak, the majority of Excavators recognized keyways to react to a natural gas pipeline gas leak, such as by securing the area and keeping others away and calling 911 and then the operator.



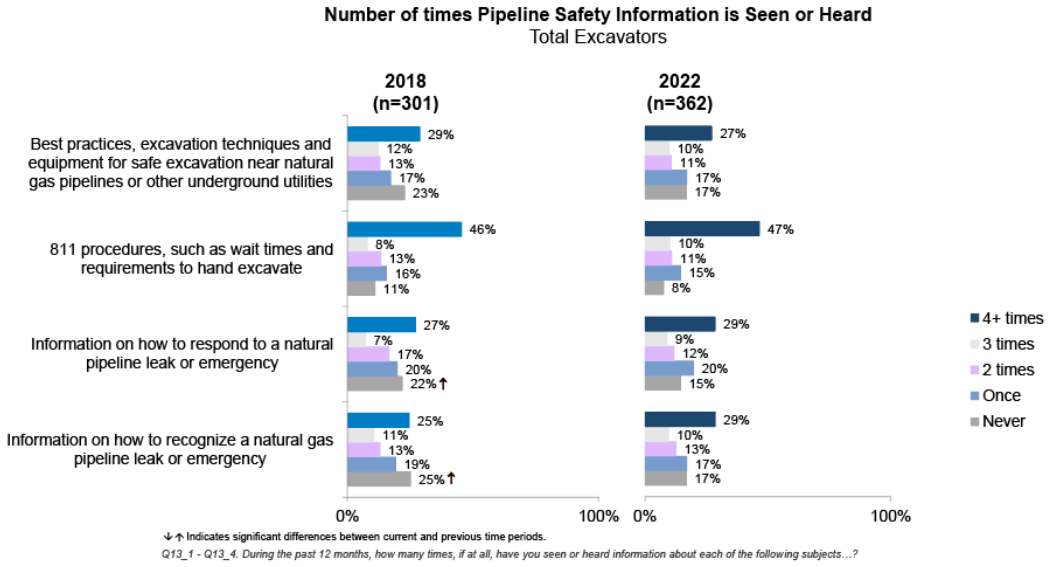
Consistent to prior years, upon being asked if they or someone in their organization had hit or damaged a below-ground gas pipeline in the past 12 months, only 1 in 10 Excavators answered yes.



Of all those surveyed, 88% of respondents indicated that they believe that Atmos Energy takes the necessary steps to make Excavators and contractors aware of the location of underground facilities. 82% of respondents indicated that they believe that Atmos Energy takes the necessary measures to ensure Excavators and contractors know how to prevent a dig-in.



Almost 50% of Excavators indicated that they see safety information on 811 procedures at least 4 times per year. Excavators indicating they *never* saw or heard information on how to respond to a recognize a leak/emergency is down.



When asked how they would like to receive information in the future, internet/email remains the most preferred method of receiving safety information (49%), followed by direct mail (16%) and taking a class or attending a professional meeting (16%).