

Rep. Chrissy Houlahan Written Remarks for T&I Member Day

5 Minutes - Wednesday May 14th, 2025

Thank you Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen for the opportunity to testify before the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee today.

As the Committee works to advance the reauthorization of the federal pipeline safety programs in the 119th Congress, I am participating in this hearing to call attention to the deadly safety risks associated with Aldyl A plastic piping.

Two years ago on March 24, 2023, a natural gas-fueled explosion in my district at the R.M. Palmer Company chocolate factory in West Reading, Pennsylvania tragically killed seven people, injured ten, and displaced three families from their homes.

Two months ago, the National Transportation Safety Board completed its final report of the incident and “determined that the probable cause of

the explosion was degradation of a retired 1982 Aldyl A polyethylene service tee with a Delrin polyacetal **[pol-ee-ASS-uh-tal]** insert that allowed natural gas to leak and migrate underground into the R.M. Palmer Company candy factory buildings, where it was ignited by an unknown source.”

The Safety Board recommended the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration advise natural gas distribution pipeline operators to address the risk associated with Aldyl A service tees by replacing or remediating them. Furthermore, the NTSB found that operators may not be aware of the locations of their plastic natural gas assets vulnerable to degradation in elevated temperature environments, urging operators to do more to evaluate and mitigate risks.

I commend the NTSB for its work, which sheds clarity onto the devastating incident for my community and those impacted.

Unfortunately, however, the findings are not particularly surprising.

DuPont’s Aldyl A has a long and well-documented history of “poor performance histories relative to brittle-like cracking,” including several

Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration warnings dating back to 1999.

Concerningly, in just the past two years, there have been two deadly incidents involving Aldyl A in the United States. The first in my community and the second in South Jordan, Utah in November 2024, which led to the death of a 15-year-old child, displaced families, and damaged several residences. In its preliminary report for the South Jordan explosion, the NTSB cited a leak in the Aldyl A natural gas main near the home.

Following the decades of unheeded federal safety warnings, the many kitchen tables that now have a chair left empty, and the wholly inadequate response by pipeline operators and our federal government to prevent future incidents, I urge this Committee to ask itself the sobering question:

How many more people need to die before Congress acts?

In the 118th Congress, I introduced bipartisan legislation with my Pennsylvania colleague Representative Dan Meuser to put an end to the

safety risks associated with deadly Aldyl A plastic piping. The Aldyl A Hazard Reduction and Community Safety Act requires the proper documentation and subsequent removal of Aldyl A in high consequence areas. It also allows for considerations to minimize costs and service disruptions.

I stand ready to work with the Committee to reintroduce this critical legislation and urge for its inclusion in the pipeline safety reauthorization this Congress. In doing so, Congress will finally heed the decades long warnings and greatly improve the safety of our pipeline distribution systems against the dangers of the deadly Aldyl A material.

I also urge the Committee to use its oversight responsibilities to ensure that the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, pipeline operators, and other implicated parties under the Committee's jurisdiction expeditiously implement all the National Transportation Safety Board's recommendations in its final report for the Palmer incident to help prevent a future Aldyl A explosion.

Once again, I thank the Committee for its attention to this pressing issue, especially considering the troubling increase in deadly Aldyl A explosions in recent years. On behalf of my constituents who lost their lives and my community, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in today's hearing.

Thank you and I yield back.