



2026 Fall Operations Conference

October 26-27, 2026

Saratoga Hilton - Saratoga Springs, NY

Track Format:

Damage Prevention & Field Operations

Regulatory & Business Fundamentals

Pipeline Safety Risk Mitigation & Regulatory Change



Register Now



2026 Fall Operations Conference

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2026 Fall Operations Conference

Saratoga Hilton – Saratoga Springs, NY – Program at-a-Glance

Day 1: October 26, 2026

Registration & Continental Breakfast: 9:00 – 10:00am in Exhibit Hall/Gallery

General Session: 10:00 – 11:00am in M2

- Welcome, José Costa, NGA President & CEO
- Exhibitor Presentations
- **Keynote: A Fireside Chat with Mark Kahrer, Senior Vice President at New Jersey Natural Gas**

Breakout Sessions

Tracks	Damage Prevention & Field Operations <i>Saratoga 1</i>	Regulatory & Business Fundamentals <i>Saratoga 2</i>	Pipeline Safety & Risk Mitigation <i>Saratoga 3</i>
Session 1 <i>11:05 - 11:15</i>	Track Chair Welcome	Track Chair Welcome	Track Chair Welcome
Session 2 <i>11:15 - 12:15</i>	VR-X-SIM with NY-811	Consumer Energy Alliance on Energy Affordability, Investment & the Path Forward	Work Zone Safety

Lunch: 12:15 – 1:30 – M1

Session 3 <i>1:30 – 2:15</i>	Every Ticket Starts Smarter: Integrating AI-Powered Subsurface Intelligence into Damage Prevention	Why Proactive Risk Management Matters	NYSEARCH Project Update: Rapicure
Session 4 <i>2:15 – 3:15</i>	Damage Prevention High Level Road Map Overview-To include Mapping of Gas Assets	Overview of Gas Distribution Rule	Master Meters: The Massachusetts Experience

Networking Break: 3:15 – 3:30 – In Exhibit Hall/Gallery

Session 5 <i>3:30 – 4:30</i>	Delayed Dig Safe Ticket: Operator Challenges Panel Discussion	Energy Affordability Panel	Practical Aspects of Emissions Monitoring in LDC Operations
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Please Join us for our Evening Reception

Location: Exhibit Hall/Gallery from 4:30-6:00PM

Thank you to our reception sponsors: Bascom-Turner Instruments, Inc., Picarro Inc., & Precision Pipeline Solutions

Day 2: October 27, 2026

Registration and Continental Breakfast - 7:30 – 8:30am in Exhibit Hall/Gallery

General Session: 9:00-9:55AM in M2

Keynote: A Fireside Chat with Paul Roberti, Administrator at PHMSA, on PHMSA's Priorities and the Future of Pipeline Safety Regulation

Breakout Sessions

Tracks	Damage Prevention & Field Operations <i>Saratoga 1</i>	Regulatory & Business Fundamentals <i>Saratoga 2</i>	Pipeline Safety & Risk Mitigation <i>Saratoga 3</i>
Session 1 <i>10:00 – 10:50</i>	Operational Focus on Gas Quality and Interchangeability	Northeast Regulatory & Policy Environments	PSMS Safety Award Winners Panel: Eversource & PPS

Networking Break: 10:50 – 11:00 in Saratoga Ballroom Foyer

Session 2 <i>11:00 – 11:55</i>	The Future of Fusion: Integrity, Accountability & Workforce	Whitepaper: Evaluation of Pipeline Safety Performance	Work Zone Safety Roundtable Discussion
<i>11:55 – 12:00</i>	Session Wrap-up	Session Wrap-up	Session Wrap-up

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Track A – Damage Prevention & Field Operations

Day 1 – October 26, 2026

9:00 – 10:00 Registration and Continental Breakfast

General Session <i>10:00 - 11:00</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Welcome, José Costa, NGA President and CEO➤ Exhibitor Introductions➤ Keynote: A Fireside Chat with Mark Kahrer, Senior Vice President, New Jersey Natural Gas
Session 1 <i>11:05 - 11:15</i>	Track Chair Welcome – <i>Brandon Mariner, Central Hudson Gas & Electric</i>
Session 2 <i>11:15 - 12:15</i>	VR-X-SIM <i>Roger Sampson, Chris Swaine, & John McKee, NY 811</i> NY811 Virtual Reality Excavator Simulator (VR-X-SIM) is a one-of-a-kind training and research system designed to capture insights from excavators and identify potential breakdowns in the excavation process that can lead to damage to underground infrastructure. This session will explore the evolution of the VR-X-SIM, highlighting recent updates, enhancements, and new technologies incorporated into the system. We will also share valuable insights gained from years of data collection and observation across the excavation scenarios used in the VR-X-SIM. Attendees learn how the system is being used to identify common excavation challenges, better understand the human and operational factors that contribute to underground utility damage, and inform the development of more effective excavation practices and training.
Lunch: 12:15 – 1:30 – MI	
Session 3 <i>1:30 – 2:15</i>	Every Ticket Starts Smarter: Integrating AI-Powered Subsurface Intelligence into Damage Prevention <i>Robert Terjesen, National Grid; Joe Eberly, 4M</i> Presenters will share results from a pilot using public data and AI mapping to identify underground facilities despite incomplete or outdated utility records. Learn how National Grid is evaluating predictive subsurface intelligence alongside Locate Assurance, analytics, quality assurance, and 811 workflows to strengthen damage prevention before crews arrive. The session will cover findings, lessons, benefits, and plans to improve asset visibility, record accuracy, excavation prioritization, safety, efficiency, and public protection.
Session 4 <i>2:15 – 3:15</i>	Damage Prevention High Level Road Map Overview-To include Mapping of Gas Assets <i>John Fiume, National Grid</i> Provide a high-level overview of the Damage Prevention Process to include the mapping process to update gas records and GIS information.
Break: 3:15 – 3:30	
Session 5 <i>3:30 – 4:30</i>	Delayed Dig Safe Ticket – Operator Challenges (Panel) <i>Andrew Cabral, Eversource; Michael Widmer, SJI; John Fiume, National Grid; Kevin Hopper, UDig NY</i> <i>Moderated by: Brandon Mariner, Central Hudson</i> Late Dig Safe/811 tickets—submitted after work begins or without enough locating time—strain response coordination and schedules, increase damage risk, and complicate compliance with notification and marking rules. Panelists will examine causes, impacts, leading practices, and opportunities for greater industry consistency.

Day 2 – October 27, 2026

7:30 – 8:30 Registration and Continental Breakfast

General Session <i>9:00-9:55</i>	Keynote: A Fireside Chat with Paul Roberti, Administrator at PHMSA, on PHMSA's Priorities & the Future of Pipeline Safety Regulation
Session 1 <i>10:00-10:50</i>	Operational Focus on Gas Quality and Interchangeability <i>Dan Settle, National Grid</i> This presentation focuses on the operational aspects of managing natural gas quality and ensuring interchangeability across different supply sources. The talk highlights practical considerations for utilities in handling varying gas qualities while maintaining system reliability and compliance.
Break: 10:50-11:00	
Session 2 <i>11:00 – 11:55</i>	The Future of Fusion: Integrity, Accountability & Workforce <i>Andrew Mercer, McElroy; Jarod Thompson, McElroy; Steve Dombrowski, ISCO Industries</i> The fusion industry faces a unique set of challenges: maintaining joint integrity, creating greater accountability in the field, and navigating a shortage of experienced workers. This session will explore how technology, data, and connected workflows can help address these challenges by providing better visibility into the fusion process, connecting operators and equipment to each joint, and giving a changing workforce the tools and information they need to succeed. Attendees will see how greater transparency and access to actionable data can help build confidence in every joint, from the operator in the field to the contractor, inspector, and asset owner.
<i>11:55 – 12:00</i>	Session Wrap-up

2026 Fall Operations Conference

Track B – Regulatory & Business Fundamentals

Day 1 – October 26, 2026

9:00 – 10:00 Registration and Continental Breakfast

General Session <i>10:00 - 11:00</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Welcome, José Costa, NGA President and CEO ➤ Exhibitor Introductions ➤ Keynote: A Fireside Chat with Mark Kahrer, Senior Vice President, New Jersey Natural Gas
Session 1 <i>11:05 - 11:15</i>	Track Chair Welcome – <i>Christian Rodrick, NGA</i>
Session 2 <i>11:15 - 12:15</i>	Consumer Energy Alliance on Energy Affordability, Investment & the Path Forward <i>Marc Brown, Consumer Energy Alliance</i> Energy affordability is a growing concern. This session will examine how nearly two decades of insufficient investment in pipeline transportation infrastructure have increased cost pressures, as well as how efforts to reduce utility returns on equity could lead to further underinvestment in the system. The discussion will also explore how consumers experience affordability challenges, compare conditions in the Northeast with those in other regions of the country, and consider practical solutions that support reliable service while managing customer costs.
Lunch: 12:15 – 1:30 – MI	
Session 3 <i>1:30 – 2:15</i>	Why Proactive Risk Management Matters <i>Walter Munro & Mike Johnson, Aegis</i> “Compliance” is expected, but “Effectiveness” is the standard. After compliance is confirmed, company programs and procedures will be judged on “how well they actually work”.
Session 4 <i>2:15 – 3:15</i>	Overview of Gas Distribution Rule <i>Alec Day, National Grid</i> This session will provide an overview of the forthcoming Safety of Gas Distribution Pipelines rulemaking from PHMSA, including insights from the May 2026 Gas Pipeline Advisory Committee (GPAC) meeting.
Break: 3:15 – 3:30	
Session 5 <i>3:30 – 4:30</i>	Energy Affordability Panel <i>Caroline Hon, National Grid; William O’Brien, Chesapeake</i> Panel discussion focused on energy affordability addressing the pressures of aging infrastructure, regulatory requirements, and market conditions that affect customer costs while maintaining safe and reliable service. The conversation will explore practical approaches to balancing long-term system needs with the imperative of keeping natural gas accessible and affordable for residences and businesses.

Day 2 – October 27, 2026

7:30 – 8:30 Registration and Continental Breakfast

General Session <i>9:00-9:55</i>	Keynote: A Fireside Chat with Paul Roberti, Administrator at PHMSA, on PHMSA’s Priorities and the Future of Pipeline Safety Regulation
Session 1 <i>10:00-10:50</i>	Northeast Regulatory & Policy Environments <i>Christian Rodrick, NGA</i> This session provides a high-level overview of the policies and regulations shaping the energy landscape in the Northeast. Participants will learn how state and federal decisions influence natural gas operations, infrastructure planning, etc. The course also introduces key trends such as decarbonization and electrification. Designed for those new to energy policy, it translates complex concepts into practical insights
Break: 10:50-11:00	
Session 2 <i>11:00 – 11:55</i>	Whitepaper: Evaluation of Pipeline Safety Performance <i>Marth Hereth, Blacksmith Group, Inc.</i> In July, the Future of Heat Initiative (FOHI) published a report entitled “Spending and Safety Outcomes in U.S. Gas Distribution Systems – An Assessment of DIMP & PHMSA’s Call to Action.” The report claims, among other things, that investment in replacing older, leak-prone natural gas distribution assets over the last 15 years has not resulted in improved safety. The Blacksmith Group ¹ examined FOHI’s claims and conducted an evaluation using data collected by the PHMSA and operator data. The findings will be provided in a report entitled “A 2026 Evaluation of Natural Gas Distribution Pipeline Safety Performance in the United States,” to be issued in October 2026. The analysis identifies several areas where the FOHI report’s interpretation of gas system performance data leads to conclusions that are not supported by the broader evidence. Hear from the study authors in advance of the paper’s full release.
<i>11:55 – 12:00</i>	Session Wrap-up

2026 Fall Operations Conference

Track C – Pipeline Safety Risk Mitigation & Regulatory Change

Day 1 – October 26, 2026 9:00 – 10:00 Registration and Continental Breakfast	
General Session <i>10:00 - 11:00</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Welcome, José Costa, NGA President and CEO ➤ Exhibitor Introductions ➤ Keynote: A Fireside Chat with Mark Kahrer, Senior Vice President, New Jersey Natural Gas
Session 1 <i>11:05 - 11:15</i>	Track Chair Welcome – Perry Sheth
Session 2 <i>11:15 - 12:15</i>	Work Zone Safety <i>Kip Score, Tech Valley Safety</i> Work Zones are widely recognized in all types of utility construction and maintenance activities for high risk. For longer term work, which is stationary and lasting for hours, days, longer, traditional Traffic Control Plans (TCPs) are implemented. For short-term work lasting less than an hour and often less than 30 minutes and mobile, TCPs may or may not be required. Short Duration does not always mean less danger and in the opinion of many, more dangerous. This session will look at the definition of Short-Term Work Zones, Typical Utility tasks which fall into the Short-Term criteria, incident cases and potential solutions.
Lunch: 12:15 – 1:30 – MI	
Session 3 <i>1:30 – 2:15</i>	NYSEARCH Project Update: Rapi cure <i>Robert Tuttle and Heather Rubin, Rapi cure Solutions</i> Rapi cure is currently leading a project to review the feasibility for applying Spray-In-Place Pipe (SIPP) coatings to reduce leakage, provide reinforcement and extend the life of the pipeline facility (steel, cast iron, and plastic). Rapi cure will review the process for applying SIPP pipeline coating applications, benefits, and challenges.
Session 4 <i>2:15 – 3:15</i>	Master Meter: The Massachusetts Experience & Regulatory Considerations for Master Meter Operators <i>Rich Enright and William Downs, Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities</i> This presentation by Rich Enright of the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities examines the Commonwealth's regulatory experience with master meter systems, particularly gas distribution systems serving multi-building or multi-unit properties. It covers the safety, operational, and compliance requirements that apply to master meter operators under state and federal rules. The talk also addresses key regulatory considerations and practical implications for property owners and operators of these systems.
Break: 3:15 – 3:30	
Session 5 <i>3:30 – 4:30</i>	Practical Aspects of Emissions Monitoring in LDC Operations <i>Emma Neumann & Jackelyn Harris, Unital</i> The presentation will center around the NGA Center for Excellence program and Unital's internal initiatives around emission reductions.
Day 2 – October 27, 2026 7:30 – 8:30 Registration and Continental Breakfast	
General Session <i>9:00-9:55</i>	Keynote: A Fireside Chat with Paul Roberti, Administrator at PHMSA, on PHMSA's Priorities and the Future of Pipeline Safety Regulation
Session 1 <i>10:00– 10:50</i>	PSMS Safety Award Winners: Eversource & Precision Pipeline Solutions A panel discussion with the 2026 safety award winners on how and why these companies embrace safety management systems and the sharing of leading practices.
Break: 10:50-11:00	
Session 2 <i>11:00 – 11:55</i>	Work Zone Safety Roundtable Discussion <i>Moderator: Scott Perry, Eversource</i> Roundtable focused on leading practices related to persistent and emerging occupational safety issues in the industry today.
<i>11:55 – 12:00</i>	Session Wrap-up

2026 Fall Operations Conference

General Information

October 26-27, 2026

Who Should Attend?

NGA's 2026 Fall Operations Conference is open to natural gas distribution and transmission company operations personnel with interests in customer service, methane emissions reduction, or damage prevention.

Conference Contacts:

If you have questions regarding the conference, including exhibits, please contact NGAevents@northeastgas.org.

Registration:

Online registration is available on NGA's website. (www.northeastgas.org)

Member Rate: \$495

Non-Member Rate: \$795

Cancellation Policy:

Due to contractual obligations, cancellations received 15 business days prior to the program will receive a full refund. Cancellations received 6 to 14 business days prior to the event will receive a refund, less a \$100 administrative fee. No shows and last minute cancellations, 5 business days prior to the event or less, will be responsible for the full registration fee. Substitutions from your organization for the same event are always welcome.

How to Register via NGA's Website:

Online registration is available on NGA's website: www.northeastgas.org, then click "Member Login" in the top left corner.

Online Registration (for those already entered in NGA's on-line system)

If you already have a username and password for the NGA site, you can register online right now. To log in go to NGA's website, www.northeastgas.org. After you login, click on the top tab for "Events." Once on the events page, look for the "2026 Spring Operations Conference." Click on the "2026 Spring Operations Conference" and continue registering from there.

Online Registration (for those not entered in NGA's on-line system)

If you are not yet registered with NGA for online access and would like to do so, you can complete the "Individual Database Profile Form" found on NGA's member log in screen. NGA will contact you once you are entered into our database with a username and password for future access.

Hotel Accommodations at The Saratoga Hilton

534 Broadway, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

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Web App URL: (<http://nga.eventpedia.us>)



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