

Evonik's VESTAMID PA12 Set to Revolutionize Natural Gas Distribution and Transmission Lines

Innovative Product Less Expensive to Install; Easier to Maintain

PARSIPPANY, N. J., August 27, 2009 – A new high performance thermoplastic polyamide pipe that is less expensive to install and easier to maintain than traditional steel pipe has been introduced for the first time in North America.

VESTAMID® LX9030 PA12 (VESTAMID PA12) offers exceptional performance for high-pressure applications which helps gas companies effectively design their underground infrastructure without sacrificing flow capacity. Researchers estimate that PA12 pipe has significant labor and installation savings over steel.

"PA12 is an excellent alternative to steel pipe in high-pressure applications up to 250 psi (pounds per square inch) for gas distribution lines," said Dennis Jarnecke, program manager at Gas Technology Institute (GTI), a research, development and training organization serving energy and environmental markets. "It has been used as fuel lines in cars and for air brake tubing in trucks. Now we see great potential for its use in gas delivery systems."

Officials at Energy West, a Montana-based gas utility and energy supplier that is laying three miles of VESTAMID PA12 pipe for a natural gas distribution system along Interstate 15 frontage roads outside Great Falls, agree. They are home to the first installation of VESTAMID PA12 gas pipe in an established public right of way in the United States.

"There are numerous benefits to utilizing PA12 pipe," said Ed Kacer, general manager of Energy West. "The material is lightweight and allows for faster construction than steel, while maintaining higher volumes associated with higher pressures. Installation can be accomplished using a smaller construction crew, saving time and money."

In addition, Kacer said, very little initial investment is required for construction teams because the same equipment and processes are used when installing VESTAMID PA12 pipe as other plastic pipe. "Today, it's getting harder to find qualified welders and many utilities contract their welding," he explains. "We used our existing plastic fusion equipment and the fusions looked as good as a weld. Working with PA12 was a very positive experience."

To meet the needs of Energy West, Evonik—working jointly with GTI— coordinated a system of VESTAMID PA12 straight and coiled pipes and fittings. Extruded in diameters ranging from 2 to 6 inches, VESTAMID PA12 pipes can be manufactured in lengths of 50 feet as straight pipe to more than 250 feet in coils, depending on the diameter and wall thickness. This flexibility in length— particularly for long stretches of installation— saves money by reducing time spent fusing pipe ends together.

Equipment used in the installation of both straight and coil pipe did not require any modification. The heat fusion process for joining two ends of VESTAMID PA12 is easier and faster than connecting steel pipes benefitting the bottom line.

Compliance with pipeline integrity regulations is also more cost-effective. "Traditional steel pipe must adhere to corrosion control and cathodic protection requirements which add to a company's expense," says Jarnecke. "PA12 is corrosion resistant and has labor and installation savings over steel."

Federal and State pipeline safety officials, including representatives from the U.S. Department of Transportation, were in attendance in Great Falls to observe the installation, which went according to plans.

More importantly, said Jeff Smith, Evonik's technology and market development director for high-performance polymers, VESTAMID PA12 provides users with a comparable alternative to steel pipe for distribution of natural gas. "We believe this innovative material will revolutionize the gas transportation industry," says Smith. "It's less expensive to install, easier to handle, and maintenance over the long term is less than traditional steel pipe."

In research performed by GTI and sponsored by Operations Technology Development, NFP (OTD), PA12 has been evaluated for use as gas-distribution piping in North America, and technical support necessary to obtain regulatory approval for its use in the U.S. was developed. Extensive testing of materials resulted in a comprehensive database of the physical properties of PA12 pipe and demonstrated conformity to ASTM standards.

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Company information

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