

**Commissioning of pipeline Zomergem-Zelzate postponed:  
Fluxys to replace all pipes not complying with its strict safety standards**

From July to October 2004, Fluxys has laid a new natural gas pipeline between Zomergem and Zelzate in order to reinforce supply capacity for the Antwerp region. The standard pre-commissioning tests revealed major deficiencies probably related to the production process of the steel pipes. In keeping with the safety policy of the natural gas grid operators in Belgium, the decision was made yesterday to replace the pipes over the entire route. Fluxys, in its capacity as operator of the Belgian gas transmission grid, has thus taken every necessary precautionary measure but stresses that it is not liable for manufacturing defects in the materials used. The company would like to present to the property owners and users its apologies for the additional nuisance the replacement will cause.

Between July and mid-October 2004, Fluxys laid 21 km of underground pipeline between Zomergem and Zelzate. The pipeline crosses six municipalities in the province of East Flanders, namely Zomergem, Kaprijke, Waarschoot, Evergem, Zelzate and Assenede. Other Fluxys pipelines are already present in these municipalities. The new pipeline has been laid to keep available capacity matched to increasing demand for natural gas and serves notably to reinforce supply capacity for the Antwerp region. The pipeline has a diameter of 60 cm and a maximum operating pressure of 80 bars.

**Detection Of Steel Pipe Deficiencies During Pre-Commissioning Tests**

Before commissioning, new pipelines are always submitted to a number of tests, inter alia to a hydrostatic resistance test. During this test, the pipeline is filled with water and put under a pressure that is considerably higher than the maximum operating pressure. The test on the Zomergem-Zelzate pipeline in mid-October revealed major deficiencies probably related to the production process of the steel pipes. Subsequent tests conducted by experts from several Belgian and German specialised laboratories confirmed these deficiencies.

**Safety First: Pipes Will Be Replaced Over The Entire Route**

Following the last consultation meeting that took place this Monday 22 November in the presence of experts from the University of Ghent and the Quality and Safety Directorate-General (Belgian Public Service), it was decided to replace the pipes over the entire route. This decision is in line with the very strict safety policy practised by natural gas grid operators in Belgium.

**All Property Owners And Users Along The Route Will Be Contacted Individually**

For the property owners and users concerned, the decision to replace means that the right-of-way, which has been entirely restored, must now be reopened to replace the pipes. Fluxys will do everything it possibly can to reduce this additional nuisance. On special locations like under-road

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passages, pipes with different specifications have been used and they do not need to be replaced. Consequently, the replacement of the pipeline will cause hardly any road traffic disturbance.

Fluxys wishes to apologize in advance for any nuisance the replacement will cause. In the course of the coming weeks, all property owners and users will be contacted individually by Fluxys representatives and they will be compensated for the inconvenience in keeping with the rules in force.

The works, as is customary, will be executed in keeping with permit provisions and will be monitored by the competent authorities and qualified control organisations. The work schedule has still to be defined but will probably take about seven months. The delivery date for the new pipes yet being unknown, the start date of the works still has to be determined.

### **No Effect On Belgian Gas Consumers**

Fluxys will do what is necessary to ensure that natural gas deliveries can proceed normally, despite the delay to the pipeline's commissioning.

### **No Financial Impact**

The new Zomergem-Zelzate pipeline involves an investment of 9 million euros. Its replacement will trigger additional costs. The liability of the various parties concerned, the pipe manufacturer among others, still has to be established. As Fluxys' tariff system for gas transport is of the cost-plus type, costs are factored into the tariffs and there will be no financial impact for Fluxys.

**The Dutch and French versions of this press release** are available in the "Press releases" section on the Fluxys website: [www.fluxys.net](http://www.fluxys.net).

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