

Decision of the Flemish Government regulating remedial measures for the construction and operation of natural gas distribution facilities and for work in the vicinity of such facilities

Legal basis

This Decree is based on:

- the Special Law of 8 August 1980 on the reform of the institutions, Article 20, as amended by the Special Law of 16 July 1993;
- Article 4.1.11/8 of the Decree of 8 May 2009 laying down general provisions on energy policy, inserted by the Decree of 17 May 2024;
- the Decree of 17 May 2024 amending the Judicial Code, the Law of 24 December 1970 on the safety measures to be taken in the establishment and operation of gas distribution facilities, the Decree of 5 April 1995 laying down general provisions on environmental policy and the Energy Decree of 8 May 2009, as regards network management and energy efficiency, Article 5.

Procedural requirements

The following procedural requirements have been met:

- The joint proposal of the natural gas distribution network operators was submitted on 24 June 2025, in accordance with Article 4.1.11/8 of the Decree of 8 May 2009 laying down general provisions on energy policy, inserted by the Decree of 17 May 2024;
- The Inspectorate of Finance issued its opinion on 8 August 2025;
- The Council of State issued its opinion no. 78.244/1 on 22 October 2025, in application of Article 84(1)(1)(2) of the Council of State Acts, coordinated on 12 January 1973.

Initiators

This decision is proposed by the Flemish Minister for Housing, Energy and Climate, Tourism and Youth and the Flemish Minister for Environment and Agriculture.

After deliberations,

THE FLEMISH GOVERNMENT HEREBY DECREES THE FOLLOWING:

Chapter 1. Definitions and scope

Section 1. Definitions

Article 1. This Decree shall be cited as: the 2026 Safety Code for the Distribution of Natural Gas.

Art. 2. In this Decree, the following definitions shall apply:

- 1° connection: the service line and the meter;
- 2° connection point: the physical location of the point where the connection is connected to the natural gas distribution pipe or the distribution pipe of the closed distribution network for natural gas;
- 3° operating pressure: the pressure of the natural gas distribution network under normal operating conditions, which is always less than or equal to the maximum operating pressure;
- 4° existing distribution facility: the whole or part of a distribution facility put into service or designed before the entry into force of this Safety Code;
- 5° special technical provisions: the special technical provisions referred to in Article 75 of this Decree;
- 6° indoor facility: the pipe with accessories after the meter;
- 7° components: construction elements of a distribution facility;
- 8° 'third party': any person who, in his capacity as a designer, builder or contractor, referred to in Article 1(2-4) of the Royal Decree of 21 September 1988 on the rules and obligations of consultation and information when carrying out works in the vicinity of facilities for the transport of gaseous and other products by means of pipes, draws up a design of a construction site, commissions it to be carried out or carries it out himself in the vicinity of pipes;
- 9° service pipe: the pipe providing the connection between the distribution pipe, from the connection point, and the meter;
- 10° distribution facility: the pipelines, stations, storage facilities, buildings, machinery and, in general, all equipment and elements necessary for the distribution of natural gas;
- 11° distribution pipe: the pipe located between the stations and the service pipe;
- 12° distribution network operator: the natural gas distribution network operator referred to in Article 1.1.3(7) of the Energy Decree of 8 May 2009;
- 13° distribution network user: the network user, referred to in Article 1.1.3(91/1) of the Energy Decree of 8 May 2009, who injects natural gas into or withdraws natural gas from a distribution network;
- 14° pressure: the pressure measured above atmospheric pressure, also known as overpressure;
- 15° major incident: an incident with one or more of the following consequences:
 - a) a fire or explosion;
 - b) a death or serious injury;
 - c) material damage that may endanger the integrity of the distribution facility;
 - d) serious material damage to third parties;
 - e) a prolonged interruption of the supply of natural gas to a large number of distribution network users;
 - f) damage to a medium pressure pipe, category C, resulting in leakage;
 - g) public concern;

- h) any other event which the distribution network operator considers it useful to inform the regulators about;
- 16° incident: an undesired event relating to a distribution facility;
- 17° KLIP: the Cable and Pipe Information Portal referred to in Article 2(1)(1) of the KLIP Decree of 14 March 2008;
- 18° work of art: a man-made structure where habitation is not the principal function;
- 19° low-pressure distribution pipe: distribution pipe with a maximum operating pressure not exceeding one hundred millibars;
- 20° pipe: the part of a distribution facility intended for the distribution of natural gas, including both the distribution pipe and the service pipe;
- 21° maximum operating pressure: the maximum pressure at which a system can be continuously operated under normal operating conditions;
- 22° medium pressure distribution pipe: distribution pipe the maximum operating pressure of which exceeds one hundred mbar without exceeding sixteen bar;
- 23° medium-pressure pipe, category C: pipe with a maximum operating pressure exceeding five bar but not exceeding sixteen bar;
- 24° new distribution facility: all or part of a distribution facility designed after the entry into force of this Decree;
- 25° normal operating conditions: the absence of interference in any device or in any control system;
- 26° emergency plan: the emergency plan referred to in Article 70;
- 27° station: a facility whose main function is to regulate flow or pressure; measure, process or manage flows;
- 28° supervisory authorities: the persons referred to in Article 12(1) of the Flemish Government Decree of 12 December 2008 implementing Title XVI of the Decree of 5 April 1995 laying down general environmental policy provisions;
- 29° works: works carried out under, on or above domain goods or private goods and which may damage distribution facilities.

Section 2. Scope of application

Art. 3. This Decree shall apply to the following facilities:

- 1° new distribution facilities;
- 2° extensions and complete relocations over a length of more than 100 metres of existing distribution facilities from these have been designed after the entry into force of this Decree.

Repairs, modifications that do not involve extensions or complete relocations over a length of more than 100 metres, and replacements that are comparable to repairs of existing distribution facilities may be carried out either in accordance with this Decree or in accordance with the regulatory requirements that were in force at the time of construction of those facilities. When making this assessment, the distribution network operator shall apply the provisions of this Decree to the extent possible.

Articles 7 to 10, 17, 37 to 63 and 67 to 75 shall apply to existing distribution facilities. Articles 64 and 65 shall apply to existing distribution facilities to the extent that the plans and technical documents are available to the distribution network operator. Article 66 shall apply to existing distribution

facilities to the extent that the distribution network operator is in possession of the information referred to.

Art. 4. This Decree shall apply to the following persons:

- 1° the distribution network operator;
- 2° any natural or legal person wishing to start working in the vicinity of distribution facilities;
- 3° any natural or legal person responsible for supervising works in the vicinity of distribution facilities.

Chapter 2. Technical characteristics of the natural gas distribution network;

Art. 5. The distribution system operator shall design the natural gas distribution network in accordance with the conditions laid down in the special technical provisions.

Art. 6. The distribution network operator shall construct the natural gas distribution network in such a way that, under normal operating conditions, the maximum operating pressure of the natural gas distribution network is not exceeded. The maximum operating pressure may be exceeded under certain specific conditions in accordance with the special technical provisions.

Art. 7. When installing new connections or adapting an existing connection, a shut-off valve shall be installed outside the building in the following cases:

- 1° a connection to the medium-pressure natural gas distribution network;
- 2° a connection with a capacity greater than 25 m³n/h;
- 3° a connection with diameter DN50 (2")/PE 63 or greater;
- 4° a connection of a building with more than one metre;
- 5° a connection for a building that is accessible to the general public.

Art. 8. When installing a new connection or renewing an existing connection, at least one individual shut-off component must be installed on the connection inside the building before the meter. This valve can be operated by the distribution network user.

Chapter 3. Characteristics of the natural gas distributed

Article 9. The composition and physical and chemical characteristics of the natural gas injected by the transport undertaking into the natural gas distribution networks comply with the federal standards in force and with the requirements applicable to the transport undertaking.

The composition and physical and chemical characteristics of the natural gas injected into the natural gas distribution networks by an undertaking other than the transport undertaking shall comply with the standards in force and with the guidelines published by the distribution system operator on its website.

Art. 10. The distributed natural gas is sufficiently odourised so that it can be detected by odour at a concentration of one fifth of the lowest explosion limit of the natural gas. That observable odour disappears when the natural gas is burned.

The odourisation of the natural gas complies with the special technical provisions.

Chapter 4. Digging depth and minimum distances between pipes

Article 11. Distribution pipes shall be placed, as far as possible, in the public domain and buried. Distribution pipes do not need to be dug in at gas pressure reducing or measuring facilities or at overhead passages in or on works of art.

Article 12. Service pipes are laid partly on public land, partly on private land or private property, or inside a building, depending on the local situation. Service pipes can be:

- 1° completely or partially underground;
- 2° underground, or unburied but below ground level;
- 3° be above ground.

Article 13. From the design of the pipes that have not been dug in, in particular above-ground passages at works of art, the distribution network operator shall take into account the deformations caused by temperature fluctuations or forces that may affect the pipes that have not been dug in.

Article 14. (1). The burial depth of pipes is at least 60 centimetres at the time of installation. That depth shall be measured between the top descriptive of the tube, including coating, and the surface level foreseen at construction.

Notwithstanding the first paragraph, the burial depth of the medium-pressure pipeline, category C, shall be at least 80 centimetres.

If the pipe is in a mantle tube, the burial depth shall be determined in relation to the upper tangent of that mantle tube.

(2). In the following cases, the following minimum burial depth applies:

- 1° when crossing a rail track: 1.2 metres below the rail foot;
- 2° when crossing classified, unclassified or navigable watercourses: 1.2 metres below the lowest position of the theoretical and practical profile of the watercourse bed.

The minimum burial depth shall be respected over the entire length of the intersection at the time of construction.

Article 15. Deviations from the minimum insertion depth referred to in Article 14 shall be possible in the following cases:

- 1° in the presence of fittings on pipes;
- 2° in the case of technical or economic objections or difficulties on site, weighing the cost of compliance with the minimum excavation depth against the consequences of non-compliance with this burial depth.
- 3° if the wall penetration is not realised at the minimum burial depth specified in Article 14.

If the minimum burial depth cannot be respected in the case mentioned in paragraph 1(2), the additional measures shall be taken as described in the special technical provisions.

In the case referred to in point 3 of the first paragraph, the service pipe shall be brought back as close as possible to the wall transit to the burial depth referred to in Article 14.

Article 16. When installing pipes, the following minimum distances shall be respected between the pipe and other underground facilities. Those minimum distances shall be measured between the outer surfaces of the pipes, including the cladding:

- 1° 10 centimetres in the case of a cross;
- 2° 20 centimetres in the case of a parallel route.

If these minimum distances cannot be respected, special compensatory safety measures shall be taken in accordance with the special technical provisions.

Article 17. The following minimum distances shall be respected in the construction of underground facilities near existing pipes:

- 1° 10 centimetres in the case of a cross;
- 2° 20 centimetres in the case of a parallel route, where a distance of 20 centimetres around the entire outside of the pipe is therefore kept free.

A zone with a width of 10 centimetres on the right and left sides and a height up to the finished ground level is kept clear above the pipe in the longitudinal direction.

By way of derogation from points (1) and (2) of the first paragraph, the parties concerned may by agreement provide for exceptions by means of special compensatory security measures in accordance with the special technical provisions.

Article 18. Except where technically necessary, service pipes shall be laid perpendicular to the distribution pipe.

Chapter 5. Protection of facilities against corrosion

Article 19. Distribution facilities or components thereof to be buried shall be equipped with passive corrosion protection. This passive protection consists of an electrically insulating covering that meets the requirements specified in the special technical provisions.

Article 20. Steel distribution facilities that form part of the medium-pressure natural gas distribution network and are buried underground shall be additionally equipped with active protection against electrochemical corrosion by means of cathodic protection, taking into account the external permanent influences known at the time of construction.

Notwithstanding the first paragraph, the distribution network operator may determine exceptions in specific local circumstances, provided that the operational measures specified in the special technical provisions are followed.

Article 21. The cathodic protection brings an electrochemical potential to the pipe of up to -0.85 V in relation to the earth. This potential is measured with a non-polarisable copper-saturated copper sulphate electrode.

Article 22. Unburied steel distribution systems shall be protected against atmospheric corrosion by means of appropriate passive protection.

Chapter 6. Materials and components

Article 23. The materials of the components used for the distribution facilities are compatible with the distributed natural gas.

Article 24. The materials used for buried pipes are polyethylene or steel. The materials for non-buried pipes are ferrous and non-ferrous metals. Polyethylene can be used in areas where buried and non-buried pipes merge.

Article 25. By way of derogation from Article 24, other materials may be used provided that the components concerned and their compounds have a level of safety acceptable on the basis of a standard, of an independent certification recognised for the gas scope or of a report of tests carried out by an independently accredited organisation and which take into account the design conditions, and insofar as they are in conformity with the special technical provisions and the standards applicable to the components concerned.

Article 26. The components used in the construction of the distribution facilities comply with the special technical provisions on tensile strength, weldability and impact value.

Chapter 7. Construction, inspection and testing of distribution facilities

Section 1. General principles

Article 27. The supervision of installation and connection, inspections and tests shall be carried out by persons designated by the distribution network operator who are trained to check compliance with the requirements set out in the special technical provisions.

Article 28. Regardless of the types of materials used, the components are welded in accordance with a qualified welding procedure and welding method description and in accordance with the special technical provisions.

All welding work is carried out by qualified or certified welders or welding operators in accordance with the applicable standards as described in the special technical provisions. The welder has a valid qualification or certification.

Article 29. (1). The mechanical properties of the connection between the pipes and other components of the pipework are adapted to the materials used.

(2). The steel components are connected to each other by butt welding according to an electric flame arc glass process. The use of welding sleeves and flange joints is also permitted.

Screw joints are permitted for components with a nominal diameter less than or equal to DN50.

The welding procedure and description of the welding method are defined in the special technical specifications.

(3). The polyethylene components are connected to each other by nickel classes or electrical welding.

(4). Other joining techniques compatible with the distributed natural gas may be used both for connecting components from the same material and for connecting components from different materials, provided that they provide an acceptable level of safety and comply with the special technical provisions.

Section 2. Notification of biostimulants

Article 30. The distribution network operator shall notify the regulators in writing at least eight days in advance of the construction of a pipe with a length of more than one hundred metres. The nature of the construction and the notification arrangements shall be determined by mutual agreement between the regulatory authorities and the distribution network operator.

Section 3. Checking welded joints

Article 31. The welded joints of steel pipes shall be subject to one of the following non-destructive examinations:

- 1° visual checking;
- 2° radiography;
- 3° ultrasonic testing;
- 4° magnetic testing;
- 5° penetrating testing.

The modalities of the investigation referred to in the first paragraph are laid down in the special technical provisions.

Article 32. After covering the welds and other naked elements of the parts of the steel pipe intended to be buried or inserted into a trench, the quality of the insulation of the coating shall be verified by a non-destructive examination, in accordance with the special technical provisions.

Section 4. Pre-commissioning checks and tests

Article 33. (1). For the purposes of this article, the following terms shall apply:

- 1° instrumentation systems: the systems or combinations of equipment for measurement, control and regulation;
- 2° density test: a specific procedure allowing verification of the compliance of the distribution facility with the density requirements;
- 3° mechanical resistance test: a specific procedure that allows verification of whether the distribution facility complies with the regulations on mechanical resistance.

(2). Before commissioning, the distribution facility, with the exception of the buildings, auxiliary systems and instrumentation systems, shall be subjected to a mechanical resistance test to check the strength of the components and connections, and to a leak test.

The tests referred to in the first paragraph shall be carried out by pressurising the distribution system with air, water or an inert gas. During the tests, the drift of the pressure or leakage rate shall be monitored.

The mechanical resistance and density tests may be carried out simultaneously in a combined test.

The values for the test pressures and the minimum duration of the tests depend on the type of distribution facility and the pressure class.

(3). Before commissioning, a tightness test using the distributed natural gas at operating pressure shall suffice to check piping with a length less than or equal to:

- 1° 50 metres and with a maximum operating pressure not exceeding 5 bar;
- 2° 100 metres and with a maximum operating pressure not exceeding 100 mbar.

The density test referred to in paragraph 1 may be carried out by abating all compounds.

(4). The tests referred to in paragraph 2(2-3) and the corresponding checks shall be described in the special technical provisions.

Article 34. At the time of commissioning, the density of the connections between, on the one hand, those parts of the facility which have already undergone mechanical resistance and density tests and, on the other hand, the existing natural gas distribution network shall be checked by soaping at operating pressure.

Section 5. Commissioning of a distribution facility and recommissioning

Article 35. Before a distribution facility can be put into service, the distribution network operator shall comply with the provisions of this Decree and shall have confirmation that the tests referred to in Articles 33 and 34 have been successful.

A person designated by the distribution network operator shall provide the confirmation referred to in the first paragraph.

Article 36. Within six months of the distribution facility being put into service, the distribution network operator shall register the construction details.

The construction data to be recorded shall be laid down in the special technical provisions, depending on the type of facility, and shall contain:

- 1° the results of the tests;
- 2° the as-built plans.

The distribution system operator shall provide the construction data to the regulators on simple request.

The distribution system operator shall keep the construction data for the entire period of operation of the distribution facility concerned.

Chapter 8. Works by third parties in the vicinity of distribution facilities

Section 1. Measures for carrying out the work

Article 37. Before carrying out any work that may impact the ground surface or subsoil, the third party shall, in accordance with the KLIP Decree of 14 March 2008 and without prejudice to any other applicable regulations, use the KLIP system to inquire about the possible existence of a pipe in the area where the work is planned.

Emergency repairs may be commenced after the third party has notified this work by telephone to the distribution network operator and has agreed with the distribution system operator on the working method and safety measures. Urgent repairs are any intervention in response to an incident that endangers the safety of persons or goods, or to maintain public services.

Article 38. If there is a pipe within the area of the planned works, the distribution network operator shall inform the third party via the KLIP about the location of this pipe, by providing the plans or information to locate the pipe.

In doing so, the distribution network operator may provide information on the security measures necessary in the context of the planned work in order to ensure the safety and proper maintenance of the distribution facilities.

Article 39. If, despite the prescribed measures, the third party considers that the planned work continues to pose an increased risk to the natural gas distribution network, it shall inform the distribution network operator thereof as soon as possible.

The distribution network operator shall inform the third party as soon as possible in writing or during a consultation whether additional measures are required. These measures may relate to:

- 1° the organisation of site supervision in consultation with the safety coordinator during the conduct of the work;
- 2° the relocation or replacement of the distribution facilities;
- 3° the installation of additional protections;
- 4° postponement of the work.

The third party shall take the measures imposed by the distribution network operator.

Article 40. Without the prior written consent of the distribution network operator:

- 1° the height of the cover above the pipe must not be altered so that the required burial depth is respected;
- 2° the pipe must not be laid in a foundation layer or masonry;
- 3° no hard material shall be less than 10 centimetres from a distribution facility;
- 4° no other underground facilities in the longitudinal direction shall be placed in the vertical plane above distribution facilities.

Article 41. No structures shall be placed above a distribution facility.

Work in the vicinity of a distribution facility shall not prevent the distribution system operator from carrying out maintenance on the natural gas distribution network or from having access to distribution facilities in the course of subsequent execution of work on pipes.

Section 2. Measures at the start-up of and during the work

Article 42. At the start of the work, the third party determines the location of the distribution facilities on the basis of the plans received by the third party via the KLIP plan application. The work shall not commence until the third party has received the plans.

The plans transmitted by the distribution network operator are indicative. The indications on the plans are checked on site by the third party.

The third party determines the exact location of the underground distribution facilities by carrying out surveys using test trenches that are dug exclusively with hand tools.

The contracting authority or its contractor shall take all appropriate measures, taking into account the information received from the distribution network operator in accordance with Article 38, to ensure the safety and proper maintenance of the distribution facilities.

Article 43. In the event of any inconsistency between the plans and the information established on site, the third party shall immediately notify the distribution network operator.

The distribution network operator shall adjust the plans based on the available information, to the extent possible.

Article 44. If the third party finds a pipe or other underground installation not listed on the plans received, it shall contact the operators of underground facilities in the zone concerned to identify them.

Article 45. If permanent or provisional markings were placed above ground to indicate the presence of underground distribution facilities, the third party shall ensure that those markings are maintained. If those markings are temporarily removed, the third party shall return them to their original location.

Article 46. The plans and information communicated by the distribution network operator in accordance with Article 38 shall be kept available to the third party's staff and shall be present on site for the duration of the work.

Article 47. Before the third party digs the test trenches to locate distribution facilities or during the conduct of earthworks, the third party shall inform the personnel concerned of the measures referred to in this chapter and of all information documents available to the third party.

Article 48. (1). The third party shall take all necessary measures during the conduct of the work to prevent damage to the distribution facilities, including cladding of these, taking into account the information received from the distribution network operator in accordance with Article 38.

(2). The third party shall respect the distances to other facilities and shall apply all measures arising from the requirements laid down by the distribution network operator for the replenishment of trenches.

The third party shall, after prior consultation with the distribution network operator, take all necessary measures to ensure the safety of persons and goods and not to jeopardise the maintenance and stability of distribution facilities and the security of gas supply, both in the short and long term.

(3). The third party shall ensure that the distribution facilities of the distribution network operator are permanently accessible.

The work carried out by a third party shall not prevent the distribution network operator from having access to the distribution facilities within a reasonable time and for a reasonable duration. In emergency situations, the distribution network operator has immediate access. If the facilities cannot remain accessible, the third party shall consult with the distribution network operator in advance.

(4). The third party takes into account that service pipes and certain accessories of distribution pipes, in particular siphons, valves and measuring points for pressure or for cathodic protection, are not always indicated on the plans and may protrude above, next to or below the distribution pipe.

(5). The use of mechanical excavators and other mechanical ground tools and the installation or passage of heavy machinery in the immediate vicinity of distribution facilities shall be prohibited if there is a risk of damage, unless adapted protective devices have been installed which exclude damage to the distribution facilities. The stability of the ground beneath the distribution facilities must not be compromised under any circumstances.

Article 49. If the distribution facility is at risk of being damaged by subsidence, the third party shall take appropriate measures and immediately notify the distribution network operator.

If the distribution facility is at risk of being damaged by subsequent subsidence, the third party shall stabilise the underlying soil.

Article 50. In the event of damage to the pipe or the cladding, the third party shall immediately inform the distribution network operator so that the latter can inspect the pipe or the cladding and, if necessary, repair the distribution facilities, including the cladding.

The third party shall protect the distribution facility from external damage.

Article 51. It is prohibited to:

- 1° have plastic distribution facilities with a flame less than 60 centimetres without additional thermal protection of the gas facility;
- 2° to overload the distribution facility from the outside.

If a pipe is dug free, the third party shall support or suspend the pipe and attach a rubber band between the pipe and the hanging bracket, in accordance

with the instructions of the distribution network operator, so as not to damage the pipe or the cladding.

Article 52. The third party shall close gas-tight any underground wall penetration of another pipe in a building, in particular for pipes for water, sewerage, telephony or electricity, in order to prevent natural gas from entering as a result of a gas leak to a facility outside the building.

At the end of the work, the third party shall seal all intersections of underground structures or penetrations that it has constructed or that existed within the scope of its work and that the client-owner does not use or only uses partially, in a gas-tight manner.

Article 53. Any damage to a distribution facility shall be reported immediately to the distribution network operator. In the event of a gas leak, the third party shall take all measures to limit the risks, taking into account the information received from the distribution network operator in accordance with Article 38(2).

Any third party who identifies a lack of load-bearing capacity of the subsoil during the conduct of the work shall inform the distribution network operator and the road authority thereof. The third party shall take all measures to prevent damage.

Article 54. The third party shall respect the minimum distances set out in Article 17 and increase those distances where possible.

Section 3. Measures prior to the completion of the work

Article 55. The trench shall be supplemented with sand or fine earth, free of stones or hard material, excluding self-compacting, excavable materials. The filling shall be at least 20 centimetres thick. The trench should be carefully compacted with hand tools.

When undermining a distribution facility, the third party shall reapply a support layer to prevent subsidence that could damage the distribution facility.

Article 56. Before the work is completed, the third party shall check that the cover of the pipe corresponds to the original depth of laying of the pipe. If this is not the case, or if the original location depth does not correspond to the minimum burial depth referred to in Article 14, the third party shall notify the distribution network operator so that the necessary measures can be taken. In any case, the third party shall ensure that that minimum burial depth is maintained.

If the pipe is more than ten centimetres deeper than before the work, the third party shall discuss the necessary measures with the distribution network operator.

The third party correctly places the warning or protection ribbons, street pots and marks back in the right place.

Section 4. Non-compliance by a third party with the imposed rules

Article 57. (1). If the third party does not comply with the provisions of this Chapter, and to the extent known to the distribution network operator, the distribution network operator shall immediately communicate the corrective measures that the third party concerned may take. Where necessary, the distribution network operator shall request mutual consultation between the parties to determine corrective measures.

During that consultation, the distribution network operator may recommend that the work be stopped. In that case, it is advisable that the works only be started in consultation with the distribution network operator.

The corrective measures shall be borne entirely by the third party.

(2). If no consultation takes place or no agreement is reached, the distribution network operator may ask the regulators to have the work stopped immediately.

The supervisors shall decide on the restart of the work, after consulting with the distribution network operator.

Chapter 9. Conditions of operation and checks of distribution facilities

Section 1. Access to the distribution facilities

Article 58. It is prohibited to do the following without the distribution network operator's permission:

- 1° enter the premises or buildings operated by the distribution network operator;
- 2° enter or leave parts of the distribution facilities which are operated, erected, installed or constructed;
- 3° prevent or impede in any way access to all distribution facilities by the staff of the distribution network operator or any person authorised to do so.

Section 2. Organisation

Article 59. The distribution network operator operates and maintains the distribution facilities. The distribution network operator shall at least provide the following:

- 1° appropriate training for the personnel involved in the management and maintenance of the distribution facilities;
- 2° qualified personnel who are permanently available;
- 3° the necessary equipment, tools and means of communication to manage and maintain the distribution facilities;
- 4° a communication system that allows anyone to report a gas smell or an incident.

If the circumstances so require, the distribution network operator can send a representative on site as soon as possible.

Section 3. Management and maintenance procedure

Article 60. The distribution network operator shall determine the detailed rules, instructions and procedures for the management and maintenance of the distribution facilities.

Section 4. Monitoring the condition of distribution facilities

Article 61. The distribution network operator shall carry out the necessary checks on the pipelines and stations, in accordance with the special technical provisions.

The distribution network operator systematically detects gas indications at distribution facilities and on the parts of the connections that are located on public land.

Upon request for intervention and in accordance with the special technical provisions, the distribution network operator shall inspect the parts of the connections that are located outside the public domain, insofar as this is practically and technically feasible.

Section 5. Monitoring the characteristics of the distributed natural gas

Article 62. The distribution network operator manages the gas pressure in the natural gas distribution network in accordance with the special technical provisions.

Article 63. The distribution network operator shall verify that the odourisation of the natural gas in the natural gas distribution network complies with Article 10 and the special technical provisions.

The distribution network operator shall periodically monitor the odourisation level, regardless of the person who added the odourant.

Section 6. Management of plans, documentation and reports

Article 64. During the period of operation of the distribution facility, the distribution network operator shall keep the plans and technical documents of the distribution facility up to date.

The plans referred to in the first paragraph shall include at least the following information:

- 1° the nominal diameter and type of material of the distribution pipes;
- 2° the derogations from the burial depths referred to in Article 14, and the protection facilities applied thereto of the distribution pipes;
- 3° the route, indicating the unusual passages of the distribution pipe;
- 4° identification of the distribution facilities by means of a key.

The deviations from the ingraining depths referred to in point 2 of the second paragraph, which are known to the distribution network operator at the time of construction, shall be indicated on the plans.

The distribution network operator shall adapt the plans to the information available, where appropriate following a derogation adopted by a third party, in accordance with Article 43.

Article 65. The distribution network operator shall provide data to third parties who submit a plan request via KLIP, enabling them to locate the service pipes in accordance with Article 38.

Article 66. The distribution network operator shall keep records of the evaluations, tests, checks and inspections of the distribution facilities.

The special technical provisions specify how long the data referred to in the first paragraph shall be retained.

Section 7. Decommissioning of a distribution facility

Article 67. The temporary or permanent decommissioning of a distribution facility shall be carried out in accordance with the special technical provisions.

Chapter 10. Intervention following gas odour or incident and emergency procedure

Section 1. Intervention following a gas odour report or incident

Article 68. If a gas odour is reported to the distribution network operator, they will send a member of staff to the site as soon as possible.

The criteria for the treatment of the gas indications and gas leaks shall be defined in the special technical provisions.

Article 69. Without prejudice to the application of Article 72, the distribution network operator shall restore the gas supply after taking the necessary actions, provided that:

- 1° the necessary work has been carried out on the natural gas distribution network or on the internal facilities;
- 2° the distribution network user, as a result of the total or partial renewal of the internal facilities or as a result of a fire or explosion or after closure on behalf of the emergency services, has a certificate of conformity with the requirements of the NBN standards for each internal facility as described in the special technical provisions.

The certificate of conformity referred to in paragraph 1(2) shall cover the parts of the internal facilities that have been renewed or were involved in a fire or an explosion. The distribution network user shall submit the certificate of conformity to the distribution network operator.

Section 2. Emergency procedures

Article 70. The distribution network operator shall draw up an emergency plan in accordance with the special technical provisions.

The emergency plan comes into effect if a major incident occurs that the distribution network operator cannot resolve using its usual organisational structure.

Article 71. When the distribution network operator intervenes, it shall coordinate with the emergency services present on site.

The distribution network operator and the auxiliary services shall take into account, on the one hand, the possible need to extinguish gas fires and, on the other hand, the safety requirements of other distribution network users and the maintenance of security of supply.

Chapter 11. Procedure for opening a meter for a distribution network user

Article 72. When opening the gas meter, the distribution network operator shall check whether the internal facilities are gas-tight at operating pressure.

Before the commissioning of a wholly or partly new internal facility, the distribution network user shall submit a certificate of conformity to the distribution network operator showing that the facility complies with the requirements of the corresponding NBN standards in force.

The special technical provisions state:

- 1° the conditions for opening a meter for a complete or partial new internal facility;
- 2° the conditions for reopening a meter after it has been shut off due to a gas leak, work or other intervention.

Chapter 12. Management of information on the repaired gas leaks and major incidents

Article 73. The distribution network operator shall immediately report any major incident to the regulators, by telephone and by e-mail. As soon as possible thereafter, the final report of the incident shall also be transmitted by e-mail.

All incidents are recorded in a database maintained by the supervisory authorities via an automated system.

Article 74. The distribution network operator shall provide supervisors with an annual report by 1 April of the following year. That annual report will contain at least the following information:

- 1° the number of leaks repaired per distribution network operator, broken down into leaks reported by third parties and leaks detected through systematic leak detection, for both distribution pipes and service pipes. for the distribution pipe, a distinction is made between low-pressure and medium-pressure distribution pipes. for the service pipes, the number of leaks outside and inside are shown separately;
- 2° the number of leaks in distribution pipes per distribution network operator, broken down into medium-pressure distribution pipes and low-pressure distribution pipes and by type of material;
- 3° the number of leaks in service pipes, both outside and inside, per distribution network operator, showing the total number of service pipes per distribution network operator and an indication of the number of leaks per hundred service pipes;
- 4° a combined layout of the leaks on medium pressure and low pressure distribution pipes, according to the type of material in the pipe and the

- location of the defect; for defects caused by corrosion, a distinction is made between low-pressure and medium-pressure distribution pipes;
- 5° a classification of the leaks to service pipes according to the location of the defect;
 - 6° the pipe stock by material type at the end of the year;
 - 7° the number of service pipes present at the end of the year and the number of new and renewed service pipes during the previous year;
 - 8° the number of kilometres of medium-pressure distribution pipes and low-pressure distribution pipes that were surveyed as part of the systematic leak detection programme;
 - 9° the total number of cases of damage and the number of cases of damage with leaks;
 - 10° a list containing the overview of the major incidents, indicating the date of the incident, the date of reporting, the location of the incident and the nature of the incident.

Chapter 13. Special technical provisions

Article 75. On the proposal of one or more distribution network operators, and after consultation with the Environment Department of the Flemish Government, or on the proposal of the Environment Department of the Flemish Government and after consultation with the distribution network operators, the Flemish Minister responsible for energy and the Flemish Minister responsible for the environment and nature shall jointly lay down the additional special technical provisions. The special technical provisions lay down the special requirements for the following:

- 1° the design of the distribution facilities, including materials, components and gas pressure management;
- 2° the construction and testing of the distribution facilities;
- 3° the procedures for commissioning the distribution facilities;
- 4° the control of distribution facilities, including remote monitoring and control;
- 5° corrosion protection;
- 6° repairs to the distribution facilities;
- 7° the maintenance of stations and cabins;
- 8° checking the odourisation of the gas;
- 9° the treatment of gas indications and gas leaks;
- 10° emergency situation management;
- 11° the procedures for opening a gas meter;
- 12° the method of implementation of temporary or permanent decommissioning of distribution facilities;
- 13° the management of the plans and data of the distribution facilities.

Article 76. In the absence of requirements in the special technical provisions, the distribution network operator may apply a special innovative measure or method on the basis of a technical file showing that the applicable standards or good practices have been followed.

Chapter 14. Final provisions

Article 77. In Article 2(28) of this Decree, the phrase “Article 12(1) of the Decree of the Flemish Government of 12 December 2008 implementing Title XVI of the

Decree of 5 April 1995 laying down general provisions on environmental policy” is replaced by the phrase “Article 2(10) read in conjunction with Article 6(2)(1) of the Environmental Enforcement Decree of 23 May 2025”.

Article 78. The Royal Decree of 28 June 1971 on the safety measures to be taken in connection with the establishment and operation of pipeline gas distribution facilities is hereby repealed.

Article 79. Without prejudice to the application of Article 3(3), Articles 14 to 16, 18 and 27 to 36 shall apply to existing distribution facilities designed for the entry into force of this Decree but whose construction works commence or continue after the entry into force.

Article 80. This Decree shall enter into force on 1 January 2026, with the exception of Article 77, which shall enter into force on 1 April 2026.

Article 81. The Minister responsible for energy and the Minister responsible for the environment and nature are responsible, in their own fields, for the implementation of this Decree.

Brussels, (date).

The Minister-President of the Flemish Government,

Matthias DIEPENDAELE

The Flemish minister of Housing, Energy and Climate, Tourism and Youth,

Melissa DEPRAETERE

The Flemish Minister for the Environment and Agriculture,

Jo BROUNS