



**American Public
Gas Association**

APGA SOAR Program

Public gas systems take great pride in their ability to deliver natural gas safely and efficiently to over 5 million customers in 37 states. APGA is pleased to announce the System Operational Achievement Recognition (SOAR) to recognize those public gas systems that have achieved excellence in the operation of their natural gas utility.

SOAR recognizes natural gas distribution utilities that demonstrate commitment to excellence in four areas:

- System Integrity
- System Improvement
- Employee Safety
- Workforce Development

Applications will be reviewed by a team of experts from the APGA Operations & Safety Committee and will be awarded a rating based on a total cumulative score of points achieved from the program criteria in each of these four areas. Utilities can receive one of three SOAR recognition levels: Bronze (80-89% of possible points), Silver (90-96% of possible points), and Gold (97-100% of possible points). SOAR recognition continues for three years, at which point the utility may apply again to maintain recognition. A utility may also resubmit at any point for consideration to be recognized at a higher level of SOAR.

[Click here to watch a video on the SOAR recognition program.](#) Attaining the APGA SOAR recognition shows board members, community leaders, service providers and customers the utility's commitment to operational excellence.

SOAR Criteria Areas

By completing the SOAR application in each of the four criteria areas and providing the SOAR application fee and any requested documentation, utilities can be recognized as Bronze, Silver or Gold SOAR winners. A Bronze designation is awarded if the utility scores 80-89% of the possible points, Silver designation is awarded if the utility scores 90-96% of the possible points, and a Gold designation is awarded if the utility scores 97-100% of the possible points.

To view the four SOAR criteria surveys, please click on the following links:

1. **System Integrity** is defined as the state in which a natural gas distribution system is performing its overall intended function of distributing energy to all customers without being degraded or

impaired by its internal or external environment safely and effectively. Systems that exhibit excellence in system management have adopted policies and procedures for records management, emergency preparedness, regulatory compliance and system management. [View the System Integrity Survey \(PDF\)](#).

2. **System Improvement** Natural gas distribution systems keep themselves well maintained through both new technology integration and a commitment to system improvement programs. Distribution technology has changed significantly over the past 25 years with rapid advances in SCADA/telemetry, Geographic Information System (GIS) / digital mapping, and Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) / Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) as well as new market opportunities like natural gas vehicles. Systems that exhibit excellence in system improvement involve supporting research and development of new technologies for operations and gas end-use, infrastructure modernization through capital improvement programs and targeted replacement of obsolete portions of the distribution system. [View the System Improvement Survey \(PDF\)](#).
3. **Employee Safety** Employee injury prevention and employee safety education are core components of a safety program that is utility-wide and evident in all aspects of utility operations, including work performed by contractors. Systems that exhibit excellence in employee safety include adopting a safety program that includes policies and procedures for education involvement and accountability for all employees, as well as tracking safety performance. [View the Employee Safety Survey \(PDF\)](#).
4. **Workforce Development** Creative recruitment, training, education and development practices provides a return on investment through increased employee loyalty, motivation, safety and productivity. Systems that exhibit excellence in workforce development emphasize continuing education, certification and training; encourage participation in outside organizations such as state, regional and national trade and professional associations; and have a well thought out succession planning and recruitment program. [View the Workforce Development Survey \(PDF\)](#).

When the SOAR survey asks if the utility has written policies and/or procedures on a specific subject (e.g. driver/vehicle safety) answer “yes” if there is a written document on that subject that apply to the workers of the gas utility. It doesn’t matter if the written policies or procedures apply to more than just the gas utility. It is acceptable if the procedures cover other operations of the utility such as electric, water, sewer, etc as long as it also applies to the gas utility and addresses the subject. It is also acceptable if the written policy or procedure applies to a larger entity such as the town, city, county, municipality, etc. that operates the gas utility. It can also be part of a larger document, such as driving safety covered as one of many topics in a safety manual. If it is in writing, addresses the subject and applies to the gas utility then it satisfies the SOAR criteria.

If, however, the larger entity or another utility operated in conjunction with the gas utility has a written policy but that policy does not apply to the gas utility this does NOT satisfy the SOAR criteria. For example, if the city had a driver safety policy but that policy was not applied to the gas utility drivers then it would not satisfy the SOAR criteria.

APGA recognizes that there may be activities that demonstrate a utility’s commitment to each of the 4 areas that may not be adequately described in answering the questions in the surveys. The last question in each survey is an open-ended question where you can describe any activities that support the four areas.

SOAR Winners

SOAR applicants are awarded a rating based on a total cumulative score of points achieved from the program criteria in System Integrity, System Improvement, Employee Safety, and Workforce Development areas. A Bronze designation is awarded if the utility scores 80-89% of the possible points, Silver designation is awarded if the utility scores 90-96% of the possible points, and a Gold

designation is awarded if the utility scores 97-100% of the possible points. The SOAR recognition continues for 3 years, at which time the utility may apply again to maintain recognition, or, if a system feels it can demonstrate a higher level of achievement, it may apply at any time for consideration to be recognized at a higher level of SOAR.

Gold

- City of Mesa Energy Resources Department, Arizona (2014-2017)
- Okaloosa Gas District, Florida (2014-2017)
- Rocky Mount Public Utilities, North Carolina (2015-2018) *Silver winner in 2014
- City of Tallahassee Gas Department, Florida (2014-2017)

Silver

- Chambersburg Gas Department, Pennsylvania (2014-2017)
- CPS Energy, Texas (2016-2019)
- Greenwood Commissioners of Public Works (CPW), South Carolina (2014-2017)
- Greenville Utilities Commission, North Carolina (2015-2018)
- Greer Commission of Public Works, S.C. (2016-2019) *Bronze winner in 2015
- Hutchinson Utilities Commission, Minnesota (2014-2017)
- Jackson Energy Authority, Tennessee (2015-2019)
- Lake Apopka Natural Gas District, Florida (2016-2019) *Bronze winner in 2015
- Lancaster Municipal Gas, Ohio (2014-2017)
- City of Lawrenceville, Tenn. (2016-2019)
- Memphis Light Gas & Water, Tennessee (2014-2017)
- Middle Tennessee Natural Gas Utility District, Tennessee (2014-2017)
- Norwich Public Utilities, Connecticut (2014-2017)
- Owatonna Public Utilities, Minn. (2016-2019)
- Paris Henry County Public Utility District, Tennessee (2015-2018)
- Westfield Gas and Electric, Massachusetts (2014-2017)
- York County Natural Gas Authority, South Carolina (2014-2017)

Bronze

- Austin Utilities, Minnesota (2014-2017)
- City of Chanute, Kan. (2016-2019)
- Corinth Gas & Water, Mississippi (2015-2018)
- City of Ellensburg, Washington (2014-2017)
- City Utilities of Springfield, Missouri (2014-2017)
- Clearwater Gas System, Florida (2014-2017)
- Huntsville Utilities, Alabama (2016-2019) *Bronze winner in 2015
- Jefferson Cocke County Utility District, Tenn. (2016-2019)
- Long Beach Gas & Oil, California (2016-2019) *Bronze winner in 2015
- Pensacola Energy, Florida (2014-2017)
- Powell Clinch Utility District, Tennessee (2014-2017)
- Sevier County Utility District, Tennessee (2015-2018)
- Shelby, N.C. (2016-2019) *Bronze winner in 2015