

Oil industry researcher says Alyeska lost two pigs in two years

by dermotcole [Dermot Cole](#)

Dec 21, 2012 | 1658 views | 6 | 5 | | | [permalink](#)



The damaged scraper pig stuck in relief piping at Pump Station No. 5 in 2010

A critical report by Fairbanks oil industry researcher Richard Fineberg says that Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. has had two incidents in the last two years where pigs have gone missing.

A pig, which is a "pipeine inspection gauge," is a complicated device inserted into the main 48-inch pipeline to either clean the pipe or collect information. The main problem is if the pig goes into the wrong section of pipe it can break apart and damage sensitive equipment.

Fineberg, a longtime analyst of the oil industry in Alaska, said the first incident occurred in November 2010, when a false report of a oil spill led to an emergency shutdown of the pipeline.

He said the pressure changes in the line caused a cleaning pig to be pulled backward "into the smaller diameter discharge relief piping, where damaged pig parts were found blocking the relief line one week later."

He said the incident was not covered by reporters and the public was not informed about the incident.

Subsequent reports by the State Pipeline Coordinator's Office said the pressure relief system piping sustained extensive damage.

A second pig was lost in May 2012 at Valdez and parts of the machine also ended up in relief system piping.

This incident first showed up in the news in Alaska four months later, Fineberg writes, in the *Petroleum News*.

In his review, Fineberg cites these instances and others as evidence of a failure to "implement safe operating practices." He raises several questions about Alyeska's response and management practices, arguing that "situational awareness" is still a problem for the pipeline firm.

[Here is Fineberg's report](#)

* Dermot Cole's blog was originally posted and referenced on the home page of the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* electronic edition of Dec. 21, 2012, the day following release of the original report (see following page). However, the blog was missing between late December 2012 and January 16, 2013, while the *News-Miner* web site was being revamped. A copy of Cole's blog also appeared on the home page of the *Anchorage Daily News* electronic edition via RSS feed Dec. 21, 2012. [Rev. 2/25/13]

Dermot Cole Blog, Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, posted Dec. 21, 2012

[Accessed Dec. 21-23, 2012 at http://www.newsminer.com/pages/full_story/push?blog-entry-Oil+industry+researcher+says+Alyeska+lost+two+pigs+in+two+years%20&id=21209636&instance=blogs_editors_desk *]

Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, screen shot of lower portion of electronic home page, accessed circa Dec. 23, 2012

The screenshot shows a Mozilla Firefox browser window displaying the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner website. The browser's address bar shows the URL: www.newsminer.com. The website's header includes the title "Fairbanks Daily News-Miner - The voice of Interior Alaska since 1903 - Mozilla Firefox" and a menu with "File", "Edit", "View", "History", "Bookmarks", "Tools", and "Help".

The main content area features several news items:

- Military**: A blue button with the word "Military" in white.
- Education**: A blue button with the word "Education" in white.
- read more news**: A blue link.
- Dermot Cole**: A profile picture of a man with glasses and a blue button with his name "Dermot Cole". Below it are buttons for "COLUMN" and "BLOG". A caption reads: "Views expressed here are those of the author and not necessarily of the Daily News-Miner."
- Feeding ducks at 40 below zero is no task for faint hearted**: A blue headline by "dermotcole" dated "Dec 21, 2012". The text says: "Marv Hassebroek is dedicated to the principle that since hundreds of ducks are on the Chena River, he'd rather see them alive than dead or dying. 'I don't think they should die,' he said. 'It's th...'"
- Legislators decide to classify "office allowance" of up to \$20K as income**: A blue headline.
- Oil industry researcher says Alyeska lost two pigs in two years**: A blue headline with a red underline.
- University replaces human resources officer Donald Smith**: A blue headline.
- State oil forecast shows lower levels of Point Thomson production than state deal with Exxon**: A blue headline.
- Hurst Road pollution in North Pole reaches 'hazardous' level overnight**: A blue headline.
- See More...**: A blue link.

On the right side of the page, there are several widgets:

- Weather**: A section titled "Today" showing "High -31% Clear and" and "Sunday" showing "High -24% Rising temperature".
- Pro Football**: A section titled "FOR SALE" with a photo of a house and the word "home" in red.
- Search our Mail**: A search box with "e.g. auto" and "or" below it, and a "Categor" button.
- Richard**: A profile picture of a man in a hat, with "Po E phor" and "more info | e-mail business" below.
- Be**: A profile picture of a person, with "348C phor" and "more info | e-mail business" below.
- Fairbanks F Equipment**: A section with "1595 College Roa" and "907-455-8167" and "more info | e-mail business" below.
- Most popul**: A dropdown menu.

At the bottom of the page, there is a section titled "Our Town" with a photo of a diorama and the headline "New diorama added at Pioneer Park".

The browser's status bar at the bottom shows the URL: www.newsminer.com/pages/full_story/push?blog-entry-Oil+industry+rese...+lost+two+pigs+in+two+years&id=21209636&instance=blogs_editors_desk

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16 Posted Blog Comments posted in the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner as of Sunday, December 23 at 10 PM [Read from bottom up]

ajazz

13 Minutes Ago

lol fsado1. I think you need to read more than just the headline of this article and then you can unbunch your panties. Pipeline pigs are not the same as the ones that make bacon. Do yourself a favor and Google pipeline pigs. :)

fsado1

3 Hours Ago

Outrageous! Simply outrageous. Is NOBODY here upset at all that they are putting pigs down this thing... where is the animal rights folks. Just disgusting they could do this. No mention anywhere the status of the pig when it entered the pipeline; alive/dead already??? If alive then not alive for long. Cruel if alive, simply disrespectful to a fellow sentient being of not!

Truthsearcher

8 Hour Ago

Some commenters on Dermot Cole's brief but timely posting Dec. 21 ("Oil industry researcher says Alyeska lost two pigs in two years") seem to be stumbling over this simple fact:

ALYESKA'S SECOND LOST PIG EVENT, IN MAY 2012, DEMONSTRATED THAT ALYESKA HAD FAILED TO FIX PIG CONTROL PROBLEMS, WITH WHICH THE PIPELINE COMPANY HAD FACED FOR YEARS.

In his report, oil researcher Richard Fineberg has carefully documented this problem, along with other examples of problems Alyeska has sometimes failed to discuss openly and sometimes failed to fix in a timely manner, thereby increasing our environmental risks.

Dermot briefly but usefully concluded his Dec. 21 post, "Here is Fineberg's Report." Readers can safely ignore the distracting squabble between commenters HeKnowsWhatYouAre and Shandragore by clicking on the hyperlink Dermot provided at the bottom of his posting last Friday.

Read it.

HeKnowsWhatYouAre

16 Hours Ago

You are as confused as I am...nowhere does it discuss any damage to land or to Alaska. The damage was to the pig and possibly the pipe. It is quite possible that this is a problem that cannot be simply solved, if so, Fineberg (considering he is supposed to be an expert) would have given some possible solutions. Besides, if he was that much of an expert, why hasn't Alyeska hired him? I won't even get into all of the federal agencies that a national store like WalMart is responsible to and the laws they have to follow. Apparently, you have never studied business.

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shandragore

18 Hours Ago

Sorry about the peviou; I ran afoul of the 1000 character limit.

I'll pick up at the last paragraph -

Much more significantly than is the case with Walmart, Alyeska is charged by both federal and state agencies with well-defined responsibilities regarding its stewardship of the land on which it operates. What Fineberg claims to show in his report is a sad history of failures followed by shows of concern, assurances of fixes achieved, promises of future vigilance, and a wretched lack of follow-through.- a cycle which then resets and repeats.

Given what is at stake if this is true, it is very much worth reporting.

shandragore

18 Hours Ago

Dear HeKnowsWhatYouAre -

I don't know what you are in general, but your confusion is evident.

Deconstructing what I can only take as a complaint against Dermot's reportorial discretion, I find the following:

1. You have confused the significance of problems at Walmart with that of problems at Alyeska;
2. You have assumed, with no presented evidence, that Dr. Fineberg is speaking in his report of "problem[s] that they take care of," when that goes against the very crux of his argument: **THEY HAVEN'T TAKEN CARE OF THEIR PROBLEMS;**
3. You are clearly confused in thinking that the announcement of the probability that one of the largest potential defilers of our beloved state is repeatedly failing to remedy clearly identified technical and managerial failures which present a real likelihood of disastrous outcomes is **NOT NEWS.**

Much more significantly than is the case with Walmart, Alyeska is charged by both federal and state agencies with well-defined responsibilities regarding itsw stewa

[Saturday, December 22]

HeKnowsWhatYouAre

December 22, 2012

Maybe I'm a bit confused, but when WalMart has an internal problem with something, does it make the press? Why should Alyeska publicize everytime there is a problem that they take care of...after all, the next thing someone will insist on is knowing when the CEO goes shopping for food for his family. Must have been a really slow news day for this to be considered. Come on Cole, you can do better!

KimFeil

December 22, 2012

<http://www.wfaa.com/news/investigates/Pipeline-Flying-Pig-crashes-through-Grand-Prairie-home-105387413.html> is the link I was commenting about...see the video of the news report

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KimFeil

December 22, 2012

In Grand Prairie, a flying pig crashed into someone's home.

[December 21 Comments below]

DistantThunder

2 Hours Ago [December 21]

itsjusttime|8 Hours Ago

Yes, Richard is a great guy.

If I was his nextdoor neighbor I'd happily cut him a bunch of firewood every year just so I could have the time to sit and yakk with him, he's a very wise and intelligent well traveled man.

waggler

7 Hours Ago [December 21]

It doesn't sound like the pigs are missing as the "researcher" is claiming. They found the parts in the system.

LCL09

10 Hours Ago [December 21]

Fairbanks Optimist-

Nothing like attacking the messenger and avoiding the topic. I do however enjoy the complete irony in your web name!

Mr. Fineberg does have credibility with many people. However as you had a bad experience as a graduate student (or so you say) you wouldn't believe anything he has to say (researchers only do it for the grant money, right?). For others who would like to see why many find him credible you could check Fineberg.Research.com

Oh_please

10 Hours Ago [December 21]

"Isn't Fineberg that nut that lives in Ester?"

He has credibility to someone?"



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cadmus557

10 Hours Ago [December 21]

Get on that counter report F.O. lets see what the real truth is.

itsjusttime

10 Hours Ago [December 21]

Mr. Fineberg is not a nut. He does live in Ester. He is very well respected as an academic, a petroleum economist and an investigative reporter. He is brilliant, open-minded, fair, and logical in dealing with complex subjects. He is extremely credible in courts of law, in academic circles, and amongst those who take the time read his work.

Respectfully, please do not demean a man who has earned widespread respect and credibility through the application of intellect and hard work; it reflects poorly.

FairbanksOptimist

11 Hours Ago [December 21]

Isn't Fineberg that nut that lives in Ester?

He has credibility to someone?

* When the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* re-posted Dermot Cole's blog in January 2013 (see note on p. 1), the blog comments were not re-posted .
