

SAN FRANCISCO, Oct. 15, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) is testing a new wirelessly controlled twenty-foot long robot to inspect its gas transmission pipelines as part of the utility's effort to increase pipeline safety throughout their service area. The robot uses high-definition cameras, super-sensitive sensors and a laser probe to inspect for dents, cracks or corrosion without having to take the line out of service for inspections.

The Explorer 30/36 tool, named for the pipeline diameter range that it can inspect, is part of a long line of pipeline robots designed by Invodane Engineering, including Explorer 6/8, Explorer 10/14 and Explorer 20/26. Unlike traditional "smart pigs" used for in-line inspection and propelled by natural gas within the pipeline, the untethered Explorer robotic tools are battery-powered and controlled wirelessly. This allows Explorer robots to navigate through live pipelines that are considered "unpiggable" because of low-pressure conditions or other restrictions including sharp bends and plug valves.

"PG&E's mission is to be the safest, most reliable gas company in the United States and we are working with industry experts to identify the best ways to enhance the safety of our natural gas system," said Nick Stavropoulos, Executive Vice President of Gas Operations at PG&E. "Through the use of new technology, we're able to understand the condition of our pipelines, and ensure that our natural gas system is operating safely and reliably for our customers."

The development of Explorer 30/36 as well as the overall robot research and development program has been a collaborative effort through NYSEARCH, a research and development (R&D) organization co-funded by major gas companies in the USA and Canada. NYSEARCH collaboration reduces costs and allows for broader project alignment between gas operators.

Daphne D'Zurko, Executive Director of NYSEARCH, stated, "The successful Explorer 30/36 robot demonstration is the result of thousands of hours of development and laboratory testing for several Explorer platforms and their sensors that were supported by major American utilities within the NYSEARCH consortium for more than 10 years. It is a breakthrough solution that allows the inspection of pipelines that cannot accommodate traditional methods."

High-Tech Robot Is Latest Pacific Gas And Electric Company Pipeline Safety Innovation

Written by Australian Business

The Explorer 30/36 is expected to be ready for wider commercial use at PG&E and other utilities early 2014.

For video of the Explorer 30/36 tool, please click [here](#) .

ABOUT PG&E Pacific Gas and Electric Company, a subsidiary of [PG&E Corporation](#)

(NYSE:

[PCG](#)

), is one of the largest combined natural gas and electric utilities in the United States

. Based in

San Francisco

, with 20,000 employees, the company delivers some of the nation's cleanest energy to 15 million people in Northern and

Central California

. For more information, visit:

<http://www.pge.com/about/newsroom/>

and

<http://www.pgecurrents.com>

ABOUT NYSEARCH For over thirty years, NYSEARCH has worked as a consortium of natural gas Local Distribution Companies (LDCs) who have a common interest and need for research and technology development and demonstration. Today, as part of the Northeast Gas Association (NGA), NYSEARCH manages over (30) projects in various stages of development for LDCs, transmission companies, federal agencies and their manufacturing and commercial partners. NYSEARCH is located in Parsippany, NJ and NGA is

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