

# Tar Sands Blockade: The Dangers of the TransCanada Keystone XL Pipeline

Faulty Welds in Pipeline Claimed

By [Global Research News](#)

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[tarsandsblockade.org/](http://tarsandsblockade.org/)

Region: [Canada](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [Environment](#), [Oil and Energy](#)

## By William Boardman

[Sunlight](#) shines through faulty welds in the pipe of Keystone XL's Gulf Coast pipeline leg, according to members of the Tar Sands [Blockade](#), who are offering, as [proof](#), photographs they say they took from inside the pipe on December 3.

**Ramsey Sprague**, a young Texan with the Blockade, dramatically made this claim at a pipeline [industry conference](#) in Houston, shortly after it got under way at the Woodlands Waterway Marriott Hotel in Houston Thursday morning. He also promised that whistleblowers inside TransCanada would be coming forward with further evidence of flaws in the pipeline.

Tom Hamilton of TransCanada is the Manager of quality and compliance for the Keystone Oil Pipeline this currently under construction in East Texas. He had gotten a few minutes into his presentation, a case study titled "Building an ISO 9001 Pipeline System: TransCanada's Gulf Coast Project" when he was interrupted by Sprague, who had managed to chain himself to the conference loudspeaker towers.

Wearing a suit and tie and a cowboy hat, Sprague had not drawn attention while he sat through the first part of the program. As described on the Tar Sands Blockade [web page](#), as described by the cameraman who [documented](#) the event:

"Ten minutes into Hamilton's time at the podium, Ramsey stood up and chained himself to the sound equipment positioned next to the projection screen, quickly delving into an impassioned speech on the irony of TransCanada lecturing others on safety and compliance. The audience sat silent, cameras aimed at this impromptu act, as security officials attempted to address the situation without having to clear the room.

" As Ramsey spoke against TransCanada's horrific safety record, as well as its treatment of indigenous communities and others whose land and lives are being adversely affected by tar sands extraction, authorities escorted him out of the assembly and into police custody. After being detained by three Montgomery County sheriffs for documenting the act (and subsequent arrest), I was given a trespass warning and told to leave the property immediately."

## No Public Comment Yet from TransCanada

TransCanada has not yet publicly responded to questions about the charge that their pipeline in Texas has faulty welds which would make it likely to leak as soon as it's put into service.

Tom Hamilton's scheduled case study of the Gulf Coast pipeline project was expected to focus on pipeline safety. As billed in the conference program,

"Mr. Hamilton has supplied technical consulting services to a wide range of pipeline clients in the fields of quality management systems, welding and NDE, above and below ground protective coatings, cathodic protection system design, specifications, system installation and performance affirmation, corrosion control troubleshooting, and pipeline system integrity management."

The bullet points of his talk included:

- *Reviewing the current progress of Keystone's Gulf Coast segment*
- *How have ISO 9001 requirements impacted pipeline design, construction, and delivery?*
- *Overcoming the challenges associated with bringing new processes into large diameter pipeline projects built by third-party contractors*
- *Right the first time - Highlighting best practices that have seen safety, quality and environmental stewardship improve while remaining on time and on budget*
- *Discussing how ISO 9001 quality management systems aid in managing expectations when engaging and educating stakeholders*

[ISO](#) refers to the International Organization for Standardization and [ISO 9001](#) requirements are "generic and are intended to be [applicable](#) to all organizations, regardless of type, size and product provided."

### **Sprague's Critique Was Underscored by Dave Brubeck**

While he was chained to the speakers, Sprague shouted warnings to the audience about the dangers the pipeline represents, but there was little or no response from the crowd. He also spoke quietly and politely to a few people who approached him. The interruption of the conference lasted only a little longer than the eight minutes that were recorded.

While he was talking, Sprague described the events of December 3, 2012, when pipeline opponents blockaded themselves inside the pipeline for about a day before they were forced out. During that time they took pictures from the inside showing light coming through the pipe welds. According to the Tar Sands Blockade: "That mile-long section of the pipe was laid in the ground on the same day; no additional welding or inspection occurred after the photos were taken."

For several minutes Sprague had to shout loudly to project his voice over loud music played by the conference, selections by the Dave Brubeck Quartet. Once organizers brought bolt cutters and cut Sprague loose, he was escorted from the room as he told people in the hallways, "TransCanada should not be lecturing about pipeline safety."

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