

CLOSING KEYNOTE: Picarro User Conference – Fall 2024

Speaker: Alexandre Balkanski, President & CEO, Picarro

Topic: The Path Forward – Emissions and Analytics in Gas Distribution

Alexander Balkanski delivered an insightful closing keynote at the 2024 Fall Picarro Gas Community Conference, reflecting on Picarro's transformative journey and the pivotal role of emissions-based detection in shaping the future of gas distribution. Balkanski engaged the audience by recounting Picarro's 15-year evolution, emphasizing the critical need for modern gas utilities to shift focus from traditional concentration-based detection methods to advanced emissions analytics.

With a data-driven, emissions-centered approach, he underscored how utilities worldwide are increasingly adopting these methods to enhance safety, efficiency, and sustainability across gas distribution networks. His remarks set a clear vision for how emissions measurement, combined with advanced data analytics, can redefine the industry and meet today's energy and environmental challenges head-on.

Key Points from the Closing Keynote

1. A Shift from Concentration to Emissions [02:04]

- Balkanski emphasized the limitations of concentration-based leak detection, contrasting it with the precision of emissions measurement. Picarro's technology, which introduced emissions quantification, allows for more accurate, large-scale detection, delivering results 10 times faster than traditional methods.
- "Emissions has the merit of uniquely defining a leak" – the shift away from concentration enables utilities to focus on leaks of greatest impact, optimizing both safety and efficiency.

2. Survey Frequency and Infrastructure Visibility [07:27]

- By advocating for more frequent infrastructure surveys, Balkanski highlighted the importance of "driving and re-driving" gas networks to capture real-time data and prevent incident escalation. He projected a future where driverless technology could enable weekly assessments of critical infrastructure.
- Noteworthy examples include PG&E's efforts to survey their entire network annually, with results showing a 25% emissions reduction over three years.

3. The Power of Data-Driven Decision Making [13:16]

- Picarro's suite of analytics, machine learning, and GIS integration offers a comprehensive approach to identifying the highest-risk leaks. The value of emissions data lies in its versatility; it enhances pipeline replacement, odor call reductions, and regulatory compliance.
- Balkanski described how utilities using emissions-based data saw dramatic reductions in odor calls and penalties, with some even receiving financial incentives for surpassing regulatory goals.

4. A Path to Net Zero [19:11]

- Reflecting on the potential of emissions technology, Balkanski underscored the achievable goal of net-zero emissions for gas utilities. He pointed to successful cases, such as Italgas, which reduced odor calls by 65% and slashed emissions by over 80%, positioning them close to net-zero.
- This approach reduces operational costs and enhances public safety by focusing on a few critical leaks rather than a broad, resource-intensive response.

Looking Ahead: Driving Change through Leadership

- Balkanski closed with a call to action, encouraging attendees to become change agents within their organizations. By embracing emissions-focused strategies and data-driven tools, they can lead their companies towards a sustainable future in gas distribution.