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PHMSA Proposes New Safety Regulations for Natural Gas Transmission Pipelines

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) today announced proposed regulations to update critical safety requirements for natural gas transmission pipelines. The proposed rule would broaden the scope of safety coverage both by adding new assessment and repair criteria for gas transmission pipelines, and by expanding these protocols to include pipelines located in areas of medium population density, or "Moderate Consequence Areas," (MCAs) where an incident would pose risk to human life. The proposed rule provides pipeline operators with regulatory certainty, and responds to both Congressional mandates and outside safety recommendations.

"The significant growth in the nation's production, usage and commercialization of natural gas is placing unprecedented demands on the nation's pipeline system," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. "This proposal includes a number of commonsense measures that will better ensure the safety of communities living alongside pipeline infrastructure and protect our environment."

The proposed regulations **address four congressional mandates** from the Pipeline Safety, Regulatory Certainty, and Job Creation Act of 2011, **one GAO recommendation** and **six NTSB recommendations**, including the recommendation adopted in the wake of the San Bruno explosion that pipelines built before 1970 be tested. Pipelines built before 1970 are currently exempted from certain pipeline safety regulations because they were constructed and placed into operation before pipeline safety regulations were developed. In its investigation of the PG&E natural gas pipeline failure and explosion in San Bruno, CA, the National Transportation Safety Board concluded that hydrostatic testing of grandfathered pipelines would have likely exposed the defective pipe that led to the pipeline failure.

"Following significant pipeline incidents such as the 2010 San Bruno, California tragedy, there was a pressing need to enhance public safety and the integrity of the nation's pipeline system," said PHMSA Administrator Marie Therese Dominguez. "The proposal's components address the emerging needs of America's natural gas pipeline system and adapt and expand risk-based safety practices to pipelines located in areas where incidents could have serious consequences."

The proposed changes provide pipeline operators with regulatory certainty that they need when making decisions and investments to improve gas transmission infrastructure, and address priorities outlined as part of the Climate Action Plan to reduce methane emissions. The proposed changes to gas transmission safety regulations are expected to result in fewer incidents, which could lead to a reduction in gas released into the atmosphere as greenhouse gases (GHG). The proposed rule is expected to result in net annual average reductions of 900-1,500 metric tons of carbon dioxide and 4,600-8,100 metric tons of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. The rule also proposes changes to the way that pipeline operators secure and inspect gas transmission pipeline infrastructure following extreme weather events, such as hurricanes and flooding.

In addition to the specific requirements mentioned above, the rulemaking proposal would revise and strengthen federal Pipeline Safety Regulations by:

- Modifying repair criteria for pipelines inside and outside of high consequence areas,
- Providing additional direction on how to evaluate internal inspection results to identify anomalies,
- Clarifying requirements for conducting risk assessment for integrity management, including addressing seismic risk,
- Expanding mandatory data collection and integration requirements for integrity management, including data validation and seismicity,
- Requiring additional post-construction quality inspections to address coating integrity and cathodic protection issues,
- Requiring new safety features for pipeline launchers and receivers, and
- Requiring a systematic approach to verify a pipeline's maximum allowable operating pressure (MAOP) and requiring operators to report MAOP exceedances.

The notice of proposed rulemaking has been transmitted to the *Federal Register* for publication. An actual date of publication will be determined by the *Federal Register*, but a preview of the rulemaking proposal transmitted by PHMSA is available on the agency's website. For more information on the U.S. DOT's efforts to improve pipeline safety and awareness, including details about the proposed rule, visit the PHMSA website at www.phmsa.dot.gov.

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The mission of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration is to protect people and the environment by advancing the safe transportation of energy and other hazardous materials that are essential to our daily lives. PHMSA develops and enforces regulations for the safe operation of the nation's 2.6 million mile pipeline transportation system and the nearly 1 million daily shipments of hazardous materials by land, sea, and air. Please visit <http://phmsa.dot.gov> or https://twitter.com/PHMSA_DOT for more information.