



Office of the Chairman

National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, DC 20594

February 4, 2013

The Honorable Cynthia L. Quarterman
Administrator
Pipeline and Hazardous Material Safety Administration
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Administrator Quarterman:

Thank you for your August 10, 2012, letter to the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) regarding Safety Recommendations I-07-1 and -2, stated below. We issued these recommendations to the Pipeline and Hazardous Material Safety Administration (PHMSA) on June 27, 2007, as a result of the NTSB's investigation of a September 23, 2005, motorcoach fire near Wilmer, Texas. I apologize for the delay in responding.

I-07-1

Develop standards for the safe transportation of partially pressurized aluminum cylinders by, for example, requiring the addition of temperature-actuated pressure relief devices [PRD] or the reduction of residual pressure to safe limits, to ensure that such cylinders do not experience overpressure failure when exposed to a fire.

We are disappointed that PHMSA believes the motorcoach fire in Wilmer, Texas, was not caused by the failure of a PRD and was a unique incident that does not represent standard commercial operations for transportation of compressed gas in an aluminum cylinder. PHMSA further believes that the safeguards provided under the current hazardous materials regulations provide a level of safety consistent with the public interest; accordingly, the agency plans to take no further action to address this recommendation. We respectfully disagree with the findings of PHMSA's research and the decision of the agency to abandon the development of standards for the safe transportation of partially pressurized aluminum cylinders. As PHMSA plans to take no further action to address Safety Recommendation I-07-1, the recommendation is classified "Closed—Unacceptable Action."

I-07-2

Issue guidance to, at a minimum, the Fraternal Order of Police, International Association of Chiefs of Police, International Association of Fire Chiefs, International Association of Fire Fighters, National Association of State EMS

Officials, National Sheriffs' Association, and National Volunteer Fire Council, describing the risk of overpressure failure of partially pressurized aluminum cylinders and the steps that should be taken to protect responders and the general public from a vehicle fire when aluminum cylinders are present.

The NTSB is pleased that PHMSA has developed and distributed several documents to make the first responder community and the public aware of the safety risks present when compressed gases are transported in cylinders. PHMSA listed the following actions it has taken or is taking in response to this recommendation:

- developed and issued guidance to bus and train operators to ensure safe handling and transport of medical oxygen cylinders for a passenger's personal use
- developed, published, and distributed the *Emergency Response Guidebook* to aid first responders in the identification of hazardous materials involved in an incident to protect themselves and the public
- continues to issue safety advisory notices and safety alerts regarding improper requalification and marking of cylinders.

As these actions satisfy the intent of Safety Recommendation I-07-2, the recommendation is classified "Closed—Acceptable Action."

Thank you for your continued efforts to improve the safety of first responders and the public during incidents where compressed gases transported in cylinders are present.

Sincerely,

Chairman

cc: Ms. Camille Mittelholtz, Acting Director
Office of Safety, Energy, and Environment
Office of Transportation Policy