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PHMSA Issues Proposed Rule on Special Permits to Enhance Safety and Encourage Innovation

WASHINGTON – In its continuing effort to improve hazardous materials safety and efficiency, the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) today proposed to incorporate 44 “special permits” for new safety products and technologies into the Hazardous Materials Regulations. The adoption of these techniques, all of which have established a strong safety record through the special permit process, will increase efficiency, encourage further innovation, and continue to ensure the highest standards of safety in the transportation of hazardous materials.

“Safety is job number one at the Department of Transportation, and this proposal ensures that we are using safe, proven technologies which will allow us to increase productivity and compete in the global market,” said Secretary LaHood.

“This rulemaking is our first step in incorporating tested transportation technologies and operations from longstanding special permits into the regulations, thereby promoting safety and facilitating innovation,” said PHMSA Administrator Cynthia Quarterman.

Hazardous materials special permits allow a company or individual to quickly and safely test and integrate new products and technologies into the production and transportation stream. Once new technologies are proven to be at least as safe as the current regulations, they can be approved for general use by rulemaking. The proposed rulemaking would incorporate 44 special permits into the regulations, including those that address salvage cylinders, alternative packaging for hazardous wastes, aerosols transported for recycling or disposal, and authorizations for rail tank cars to exceed maximum capacity and weight limitations with specific Federal Railroad Administration approval.

The comment period for this Notice of Proposed Rulemaking closes on Feb. 22, 2010.

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