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## **News**

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### **U.S. DOT Allows BP to Restart North Slope Pipeline for Cleaning and Testing**

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) today approved BP Exploration Alaska, Inc.'s request to restart and test the safety of one of the company's low-pressure pipelines on the North Slope that has been shut down since a leak was detected there in early August.

PHMSA's approval means BP will be able to pump oil back into its Eastern line so it can clean and test the line. This will involve bringing the line up to operating pressure; running an internal cleaning device, known as a "pig," to dislodge built up solids such as sand and other sediments and then removing those solids from the line; and running an internal inspection device, known as a "smart pig," to get a complete diagnostic analysis of the pipe.

"The only way to test these lines to make sure they are safe is to restart them in a controlled, monitored way," said PHMSA Administrator Thomas Barrett.

Barrett added that the agency is requiring BP to deploy incident response personnel and cleaning and containment equipment along the line to respond immediately to any sign of trouble. Any problems identified during testing will result in an immediate shut down of the line, he said.

PHMSA will use the test results and other data collected from its on-site inspectors to evaluate whether BP can continue operating the Eastern line safely. At full capacity, the line moves 200,000 barrels of oil a day.

Barrett said the measures are needed to run the pipeline safely until BP replaces the line next year with smaller diameter pipe meant to cut down on corrosion.

Last month, PHMSA proposed new regulations designed to require safety inspections of low pressure pipelines located in environmentally sensitive areas, like the BP lines in Prudhoe Bay, according to Barrett.

The Administrator noted that the federal pipeline safety office has issued three safety directives to BP this year requiring stepped up inspections of the company's North Slope pipelines. The original order followed a pipeline failure along the Western line on March 2, 2006. It was amended on July 20, 2006 with additional requirements, and again after the August 2006 spill on the Eastern line.

PHMSA inspectors have been on site since the March spill to review pipeline operations, verify inspection data, meet with federal and state officials, and ensure completion of the corrective actions required by the agency's orders, Barrett said.

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