U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Research and
Special Programs
Administration**

400 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

AUG 15 2003

The Honorable Ellen G. Engleman
Chairman
National Transportation Safety Board
490 L'Enfant Plaza East, SW
Washington, DC 20594

Dear Chairman Engleman:

This letter is the Research and Special Programs Administration's (RSPA) response to the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Safety Recommendations P-03-1, P-03-2, and P-03-3, resulting from the accident in Carlsbad, New Mexico. RSPA requests that these recommendations be classified as "OPEN - Acceptable Action" based on the actions we are taking in compliance, research, regulations, and most notably, our impending final rule on gas pipeline integrity management.

We expect to request closure of Recommendation P-03-1 in early 2004 with the issuance of a proposed rule to address internal corrosion issues in the design and construction of gas transmission pipes. This rule will require pipeline operators to implement measures to reduce the opportunity for liquids to accumulate, provide for effective liquid removal features, require accommodation of corrosion monitoring devices, and incorporate by reference consensus standards and the results of ongoing research.

By the end of 2003, we will request closure of Recommendation P-03-2 based on publication of the final rule on gas integrity management, which will address the role of water and other contaminants in the internal corrosion process and the procedures for prevention, inspection, and repair. The rule will require operators using direct assessment to follow the requirement in standard ASME/ANSI B31.8S, Appendix SP-B2, which was developed with contributions from RSPA/OPS, the pipeline industry, and the state pipeline safety programs.

In early 2004, we expect to request closure of Recommendation P-03-3 based on our revamped inspection protocols and improved inspection tracking and coordination with our legal office to ensure violations of our regulations are enforced more effectively.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact me or James Wiggins, Director of Policy and Program Support, at (202) 366-4831.

Sincerely yours,

Samuel G. Bonasso
Acting Administrator

Enclosure

cc: Robert Chipkevich, NTSB
Rod Dyck, NTSB