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

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

SEP 23 2004

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

Dear Chairman Engleman Conners:

This is the Research and Special Programs Administration's (RSPA) initial response to the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Safety Recommendations P-04-01, P-04-02, and P-04-03, which resulted from a July 4, 2002, accident in Cohasset, Minnesota.

By the end of 2004, RSPA expects to publish a notice in the Federal Register to seek additional information on the removal of the exemption described in NTSB Safety Recommendation P-04-01. The notice will request public comment on the issues raised by a possible rule to remove the exemption and to determine whether expanded testing of pipe might provide an adequate alternative. RSPA will also review and consider information on vintage pipe and fatigue issues for natural gas transmission lines in reports being prepared by the Interstate Natural Gas Association of America (INGAA).

In response to NTSB Safety Recommendation P-04-02, RSPA will soon publish a notice to seek information on how incorporation by reference of American Petroleum Institute's Recommended Practice 5LW (API RP 5LW) for transportation of pipe on marine vessels would impact gas and hazardous liquid pipeline operators.

In response to NTSB Safety Recommendation P-04-03, RSPA will conduct a literature search and a comparison of U.S. standards with international standards for truck transportation of pipe. If this research indicates that a standard for truck transportation is warranted, we will approach a standards-developing organization to develop a voluntary consensus standard. This data collection effort will help to define the scope of a possible regulatory action in 2005 on the transportation of pipe by truck.

RSPA requests that NTSB Safety Recommendations P-04-01, P-04-02, and P-04-03 be classified as "OPEN - Acceptable Response" while we pursue the actions described in the enclosures.

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
Deputy Administrator

Enclosures

cc: Robert Chipkevich, NTSB
Rod Dyck, NTSB

RSPA Initial Response to NTSB Safety Recommendation P-04-01

P-04-01 **Remove the exemption in 49 *Code of Federal Regulations* 192.65(b) that permits pipe to be placed in natural gas service after pressure testing when the pipe can not be verified to have been transported in accordance with the American Petroleum Institute's recommended practice RP 5L1.**

Status: Initial response

Initial Response:

RSPA is reviewing the history of the exemption at 49 CFR 192.65(b) and the impact of its removal on the pipeline industry. Section 192.65 is limited in application to large-diameter, thin-wall pipe which may be susceptible to damage from improper loading during railroad transportation.

This section was amended in 1975 to allow the use of pipe transported before November 12, 1970, if the pipe had been tested in accordance with subpart J and the test pressure had been maintained for at least 8 hours. This exemption was clearly based on the premise that natural gas pipelines do not experience excessive cyclic fatigue during operation and that a flaw that survives a hydrostatic test would most likely not grow to failure in service.

Removing the current exemption as recommended by the NTSB may cause concerns:

(1) Companies maintain a pipe inventory so that they can quickly make needed repairs to restore operation and minimize the supply disruption. Some of this replacement pipe may be drawn from supplies remaining from earlier construction and other projects. In some cases, some of this pipe may have been purchased at auctions. This pipe may not have associated records necessary to verify it was transported in accordance with the American Petroleum Institute's Recommended Practice 5L1 (API RP 5L1).

(2) If the exemption is removed, there may be a period during which an operator may not have adequate supplies of spare pipe to make needed repairs. Pipe manufacturers require operators to contract for large orders of pipe, much more than an operator would ever need just for spare pipe. Therefore, pipe orders tend to be infrequent. It may be necessary to allow some time for operators to use existing inventories of pre-tested pipe.

(3) Insufficient inventories of spare pipe could be an energy assurance issue. This needs to be investigated before any rulemaking to remove the exemption. This research might consist of a poll of less than 10 large operators to determine how many feet of pre-tested pipe

that cannot be verified to have been transported in accordance with API RP 5L1 remain in their inventory. Another option is to ask the pipeline trade associations to quantify how much such pipe resides in their member companies' inventories.

If spare pipe inventories are an issue, one option would be to modify the exemption at section 192.65(b) to require non-destructive evaluation (NDE) of the longitudinal welds in addition to the required hydrostatic test. NDE could include radiography or ultrasonic inspections to find flaws that are below the critical length, which would not fail during a hydrostatic test. This would provide a mechanism to allow operators to use existing pipe inventories for which transportation records are not available. Another option would be to hydrostatically test the unverified spare pipe inventory to a pressure of at least 100% of specified minimum yield strength (SMYS) for two hours as part of a leak test.

RSPA expects to publish a notice in the Federal Register by the end of 2004, to seek additional information on the removal of the exemption described in NTSB Safety Recommendation P-04-01. The notice will request input from the public and the pipeline industry on the issues raised by a possible rule to remove the exemption and to determine whether expanded testing of pipe is necessary. RSPA will also review and consider information on vintage pipe and fatigue issues for natural gas transmission lines in reports being prepared by the Interstate Natural Gas Association of America (INGAA).

Action Requested: RSPA requests that this recommendation be classified as "OPEN - Acceptable Response" based on the foregoing information.

RSPA Initial Response to
NTSB Safety Recommendation
P-04-02

P-04-02 **Amend 49 *Code of Federal Regulations* to require that natural gas pipeline operators (Part 192) and hazardous liquid pipeline operators (Part 195) follow the American Petroleum Institute's recommended practice RP 5LW for transportation of pipe on marine vessels.**

Status: Initial response

Initial Response:

RSPA supports requiring gas and hazardous liquid pipeline operators to comply with American Petroleum Institute's Recommended Practice 5LW (API RP 5LW) for transportation of pipe on marine vessels. However, we need more information on the potential economic and supply impacts of this action before issuing a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking.

By the end of 2004, RSPA/Office of Pipeline Safety will publish a notice requesting information on how incorporation of API RP 5LW would impact gas and hazardous liquid pipeline operations. This notice will seek comments on the same questions raised in our initial response to NTSB Safety Recommendation P-04-01. This includes the practical impact of compliance with API RP 5LW on the use of existing stocks of pipe for repairs and alterations to pipeline systems.

Action Requested: RSPA requests that this recommendation be classified as "OPEN - Acceptable Response" based on the foregoing information.

RSPA Initial Response to NTSB Safety Recommendation P-04-03

P-04-03 **Evaluate the need for a truck transportation standard to prevent damage to pipe, and, if needed, develop the standard and incorporate it in 49 *Code of Federal Regulations* Parts 192 and 195 for both natural gas and hazardous liquid line pipe.**

Status: Initial response

Initial Response:

RSPA agrees that we should evaluate the need for a truck transportation standard to prevent damage to pipe. However, there is little data to demonstrate that truck transportation poses a pipe damage or quality issue.

By early 2005, we will undertake a literature search to: (1) identify any problems with truck transportation of pipe; (2) document quantities of pipe transported by truck, rail, and marine vessels; (3) document in-service failures of pipe transported by truck; and, (4) evaluate any domestic or international standards addressing this issue. This may be followed by some engineering vibration analysis to assess the risks of truck transportation, either alone or as part of an overall transport including rail, marine, and truck segments.

This research will help define the scope of a possible regulatory action in 2005. If this research indicates that a standard for truck transportation is warranted, we will approach a standards-developing organization to develop a voluntary consensus standard.

Action Requested: RSPA requests that this recommendation be classified as "OPEN - Acceptable Response" based on the foregoing information.