National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Office of the Chairman

MAY 25 1999

Honorable Kelley S. Coyner
Administrator
Research and Special Programs Administration
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Ms. Coyner:

The National Transportation Safety Board received your May 4, 1999, letter about Safety Recommendation P-98-30, which was issued to the Research and Special Programs Administration (RSPA) on November 18, 1998, as a result of the Board's investigation of the June 26, 1996, pipeline rupture and release of fuel oil into the Reedy River at Fork Shoals, South Carolina. The Safety Board asked that RSPA assess the potential safety risks associated with rotating pipeline controller shifts and establish industry guidelines for the development and implementation of pipeline controller work schedules that reduce the likelihood of accidents attributable to controller fatigue.

The Safety Board is pleased that RSPA is reviewing previous pipeline accidents and research on fatigue and rotating work schedules and that RSPA is also coordinating with other Department of Transportation agencies and the pipeline industry to address fatigue associated with rotating pipeline controller shifts. The Board understands that RSPA has bolstered its examination of fatigue as a causative factor in previous pipeline accidents and has modified its inspection process to focus on the influence of fatigue. Further, RSPA will evaluate the need to develop industry guidelines that reduce the likelihood of accidents attributable to controller fatigue.

Accordingly, pending a reply from RSPA on the status of these initiatives, Safety Recommendation P-98-30 has been classified "Open—Acceptable Response."

Thank you for your thorough response. The Board looks forward to further updates on the implementation of Safety Recommendation P-98-30.

Sincerely,

Jim Hall
Chairman