



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

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

DEC. 23, 2003

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

Dear Chairman Connors:

This is the Research and Special Programs Administration's (RSPA) updated response to National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Safety Recommendation P-02-05, which resulted from the NTSB's investigation of the June 10, 1999 hazardous liquid pipeline accident in Bellingham, Washington. RSPA requests that this recommendation be classified as "CLOSED -- Acceptable Action" based on the publication of an advisory bulletin to all pipeline owners and operators who utilize Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems.

The advisory bulletin urges pipeline owners and operators to establish thorough testing regimes when they design and implement modifications and enhancements of their SCADA systems. It also advises consideration of off-line or developmental workstations to test changes, then deploy the changes on-line under close monitoring at times when few operational changes are expected on the pipeline. We believe that applying these techniques will help ensure that changes in the SCADA system environment do not have an unexpected effect on pipeline operations. A copy of the advisory bulletin is enclosed.

Although Recommendation P-02-05 calls only for an advisory bulletin, RSPA has taken additional actions to improve SCADA and controller operations and our inspection process. RSPA has initiated a SCADA study to establish a national and uniform perspective on the safety evaluation of pipeline SCADA technology. In addition to developing inspection and guidance criteria, the project will also draw on the results of the NTSB's ongoing SCADA survey and report. RSPA has also initiated a study of Controller Certification in compliance with Section 13(b) of the Pipeline Safety Improvement Act of 2002 to develop tests and other requirements for certifying the qualifications of individuals who operate computer-based systems for controlling the operations of pipelines.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. G. BONASSO'. The signature is stylized with a large initial 'S' and 'G'.

Samuel G. Bonasso  
Deputy Administrator

Enclosure

cc: Robert Chipkevich, NTSB  
Rod Dyck, NTSB