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**DEPARTMENT OF  
TRANSPORTATION**
**Research and Special Programs Ad-  
ministration**
**[Docket No. P-94-1W; Notice 2]**

Columbia Gulf Transmission Company;  
Transportation of Natural Gas by Pipeline,  
Grant of Waiver

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Columbia Gulf Transmission Company (Columbia Gulf) has petitioned the Research and Special Programs Administration (RSPA) for a waiver from compliance with 49 CFR 192.612(b)(3), which requires that gas pipeline facilities in the Gulf of Mexico found to be exposed on the seabed or constituting a hazard to navigation be reburied so that the top of the pipe is 36 inches below the seabed for normal excavation or 18 inches for rock excavation.

During a DOT-required survey, Columbia Gulf discovered that a 260 foot portion of the 36-inch Bluewater Mainline 200 did not meet the 12-inch depth of cover requirements of §192.612. At the point where coverage is not sufficient, Columbia Gulf's pipeline crosses over a Trunkline Gas Company (Trunkline) 16-inch pipeline and an Amoco Production Company (AMOCO) abandoned 4-inch pipeline. Therefore, Columbia Gulf cannot comply with the lowering requirement without first lowering or crossing below the Trunkline and Amoco pipelines. This coincidental lowering would present the potential for damage to these lines which could cause environmental pollution.

This waiver will allow Columbia Gulf to cover 813 feet along the subject pipeline segment with a concrete mesh blanket alternative to the 36-inch depth of cover requirement. The waiver will also extend the time limitation required for compliance with §192.612 until November 30, 1995, to allow for completion of the work.

A "concrete mesh blanket" unit is an 8 foot x 20 foot section constructed from 160 individually cast 17 inch x 17 inch x 9 inch beveled concrete briquettes interconnected with 3/4 inch polypropylene UV stabilized line. A total of 41 (8 foot x 20 foot x 9 inch) units of "concrete mesh blanket" will be required to cover the 813 feet of affected pipeline. Each of the 41

units will be hydrojetted flush with the seabed and permanently anchored with six screw anchors.

The top of the 12-inch pipeline the mesh blanket is intended to cover is presently buried 6 inches below unconsolidated bottom in the Gulf of Mexico from Lat. 29 deg.30'21.46", Long. 92 deg.22'54.08" to Lat. 29 deg.30'13.4", Long. 92 deg.22'53.98"; Block 15, Vermillion area, approximately 8 miles South of Pecan Island, LA. The pipeline is coated with concrete.

The use of the proposed blanket will effectively cover the pipeline to 15 inches (9" blanket + 6" cover). The required reburial is to 36 inches below the bottom or 18 inches below a rock bottom. Therefore this waiver is necessary to allow for the use of the concrete mesh blanket.

Columbia Gulf will also install a rock shield over the pipeline before installation of the blanket. The rock shield must be of at least 3/8 inches of thickness constructed of an appropriate material, such as "Tuff N Nuff" manufactured by Submar.

In response to this petition and the justification contained therein, RSPA issued a notice of petition for waiver inviting interested parties to comment (Notice 1)(60 FR 10893, Feb. 28, 1995). In that notice, RSPA explained why granting a waiver from the requirements of §192.612 to allow placement of the concrete mesh blanket would not have a deleterious impact on safety. Comments were received from three pipeline operators and one interstate pipeline association. Each commentator endorsed the petition and recommended granting the waiver.

One commentator further recommended that RSPA also require Columbia Gulf to notify Trunkline at least 48 hours in advance so as to allow a Trunkline inspector to be present while work is in progress in the vicinity of its pipeline. RSPA agrees, and hereby requires Columbia Gulf to notify Trunkline as described.

In view of these reasons and those stated in the foregoing discussion, RSPA, by this order, finds that a waiver of compliance with §192.612(c)(3) is consistent with pipeline safety. Accordingly, Columbia Gulf Transmission Company's petition from compliance with §192.612(b)(3) is granted.

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 1672(d); §1.53, and appendix A of part 106.

Issued in Washington, D.C. on May 19, 1995.

**Cesar De Leon,**  
*Acting Associate Administrator for Pipeline Safety.*

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