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News

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PHMSA Extends Comment Period for New Safety Regulations for Natural Gas Transmission Pipelines

WASHINGTON - Today, the Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration announced that it will extend the comment period on the proposed natural gas transmission rule by 30 days. The proposed regulations would update critical safety requirements for natural gas transmission pipelines and would both adapt and expand risk-based safety practices to pipelines located in areas where incidents could have serious consequences. The proposed regulations would further enhance safety for the millions of Americans who both live near and rely on energy products delivered via pipeline and would also provide pipeline operators with regulatory certainty, and respond to both Congressional mandates and outside safety recommendations.

The Federal rulemaking process begins within agencies like PHMSA, but cannot move forward without input from the public and key stakeholders who provide unique and varied perspectives on proposed safety regulations.

The comment period will be extended by 30 days from June 7, 2016, to July 7, 2016, so that individuals have as much time as possible to review and submit comments. The proposed regulations were made available to the public on March 17, 2016, nearly three weeks prior to its publication in the Federal Register on April 8, 2016.

“The proposed regulations address the emerging needs of America's natural gas pipeline system and include commonsense measures to better ensure the safety of communities living alongside pipeline infrastructure and protect our environment,” said PHMSA Administrator Marie Therese Dominguez. “We want to be responsive to stakeholders who have requested additional time to review the proposed regulations and, with this extension, we have effectively provided a public comment period of 112 days. Once the comment period closes, we will fully consider all comments that were received, as we evaluate options for finalizing the rule.”

The proposed regulations address four congressional mandates from the Pipeline Safety, Regulatory Certainty, and Job Creation Act of 2011, one GAO recommendation and six NTSB recommendations, including the recommendation adopted in the wake of the San Bruno explosion that pipelines built before 1970 be tested. Pipelines built before 1970 are currently

exempted from certain pipeline safety regulations because they were constructed and placed into operation before pipeline safety regulations were developed. In its investigation of the PG&E natural gas pipeline failure and explosion in San Bruno, CA, the National Transportation Safety Board concluded that hydrostatic testing of grandfathered pipelines would likely have exposed the defective pipe that led to the pipeline failure.

A notice formalizing this extension will be published in the Federal Register. PHMSA will also hold public webinars and host briefings on the Safety of Gas Transmission and Gathering Pipelines NPRM at two upcoming advisory committee meetings, further allowing the opportunity for public input on the proposed updates to the gas transmission safety standards.

To submit comments electronically to the docket, visit <http://www.regulations.gov> and enter PHMSA-2011-0023 in the search box.

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The mission of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration is to protect people and the environment by advancing the safe transportation of energy and other hazardous materials that are essential to our daily lives. PHMSA develops and enforces regulations for the safe operation of the nation's 2.6 million mile pipeline transportation system and the nearly 1 million daily shipments of hazardous materials by land, sea, and air. Please visit <http://phmsa.dot.gov> or https://twitter.com/PHMSA_DOT for more information.