



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Pipeline and Hazardous  
Materials Safety  
Administration**

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

October 27, 2023

Via E-mail

Ms. Eileen Vélez-Vega  
Secretary of Transportation and Public Works of Puerto Rico  
Centro Gubernamental Roberto Sánchez Vilella, Apartado 41269  
San Juan Puerto Rico 00940-1269

Dear Secretary Vélez-Vega:

On October 27, 2023, a representative of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) conducted an evaluation of the Puerto Rico Department of Transportation and Public Works' enforcement of its excavation damage prevention law. PHMSA conducted this evaluation pursuant to 49 United States Code § 60114 and 49 Code of Federal Regulations Part 198, Subpart D—State Damage Prevention Enforcement Programs. Based on this evaluation, PHMSA has determined that the enforcement of Puerto Rico's excavation damage prevention law is "adequate."

PHMSA appreciates your dedication to pipeline safety. As you are aware, excavation damage continues to be a leading cause of pipeline failures, some of which result in fatalities, serious injuries, and environmental damage. Nationwide statistics show that effective enforcement of state damage prevention laws reduces excavation damage and pipeline incidents, resulting in enhanced public safety.

Should you or your staff have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Mr. David Appelbaum, PHMSA State Evaluator, at (202) 617-6329 or by email at [david.appelbaum@dot.gov](mailto:david.appelbaum@dot.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Zach Barrett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Zach Barrett  
Director, State Programs