



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

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

December 5, 2025

**NOTICE OF LIMITED ENFORCEMENT DISCRETION FOR DIRECT FINAL RULE  
TITLED “PIPELINE SAFETY: STANDARDS UPDATE—API RP 1170 AND API RP  
1171”**

On July 1, 2025, the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) published in the *Federal Register* a direct final rule (DFR) titled “Pipeline Safety: Standards Update—API RP 1170 and API RP 1171.”<sup>1</sup> The DFR incorporates by reference into 49 CFR part 192 the second editions of API Recommended Practice (RP) 1170, Design and Operation of Solution-mined Salt Caverns Used for Natural Gas Storage, and API Recommended Practice (RP) 1171, Functional Integrity of Natural Gas Storage in Depleted Hydrocarbon Reservoirs and Aquifer Reservoirs, effective as of January 1, 2026.<sup>2</sup>

On September 29, 2025, the American Gas Association and Interstate Natural Gas Association of America (Associations) filed a request for a stay of enforcement of the DFR until January 1, 2027.<sup>3</sup> The Associations expressed support for incorporating the second editions of API RPs 1170 and 1171 by reference, but urged PHMSA to provide underground gas storage operators, Federal and State regulatory agencies, and underground gas storage service providers with additional time to implement updated policies and procedures. The Associations stated that these updates could take six to nine months (with associated training programs estimated to take an additional six months), and that operators have already allocated resources and scheduled activities for the rest of 2025 to accommodate the upcoming winter heating season. The Associations asked PHMSA to stay enforcement of the DFR for one year to “[allow] all stakeholders proper time to develop the revised storage integrity management programs that meet all aspects of the RPs.”

PHMSA has considered the Associations’ request and is issuing this notice of limited enforcement discretion (Notice) to facilitate orderly and effective implementation of the updated industry standards. Specifically, this Notice advises regulated entities that PHMSA will exercise

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<sup>1</sup> 90 FR 28086 (July 1, 2025) (“DFR”).

<sup>2</sup> On October 2, 2025, PHMSA published a notice in the *Federal Register* confirming the January 1, 2026, effective date of the DFR. 90 FR 47622 (Oct. 2, 2025) (Direct Final Rule; confirmation of effective date).

<sup>3</sup> Associations, Doc. No PHMSA-2025-0120-0005, *Request for a Stay of Enforcement* (Sept. 29, 2025). The American Gas Association also separately submitted comments during the comment period supporting the Direct Final Rule. American Gas Association, Doc. No. PHMSA-2025-0120-0001, *Comments in Response to Direct Final Rule* (Sept. 2, 2025).

its inherent enforcement discretion to refrain from taking enforcement action alleging violations of the DFR's requirements by allowing operators to comply with either the first or second editions of API RPs 1170 and 1171. The period of this limited enforcement discretion will be until January 1, 2027, providing regulatory flexibility to underground gas storage operators and providers during the upcoming winter heating season while maintaining an equivalent level of safety. This enforcement discretion will ensure operators have sufficient time to implement the updated industry standards, revise internal procedures, train personnel, and update documentation systems accordingly.

Regulated entities may rely on this notice as a temporary safeguard from PHMSA regulatory enforcement as described herein. PHMSA recommends that its State partners exercise the same enforcement discretion described in this Notice. To the extent that this Notice includes guidance on how regulated entities may comply with existing regulations, it does not have the force and effect of law and is not meant to bind the regulated entities in any way. Nothing herein prohibits PHMSA from rescinding this limited exercise of its enforcement discretion and pursuing an enforcement action if it determines that a significant safety issue warrants doing so. Nothing herein relieves operators from compliance with any other applicable provisions of Federal regulations or other law, and PHMSA reserves the right to exercise all of its other authorities.

Issued December 8, 2025, in Washington, D.C.

Linda Daugherty  
Acting Associate Administrator, Office of Pipeline Safety  
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration