



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

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

September 30, 2025

Via Email

Brian Rybarik
Chair
Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission
621 Woodland Square Loop SE
Lacey, WA 98503

Dear Chair Rybarik:

On September 30, 2025, a representative of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) conducted an evaluation of the enforcement by the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission of the Washington State excavation damage prevention law. PHMSA conducted this evaluation pursuant to 49 United States Code (USC) § 60114 and 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 198, Subpart D—State Damage Prevention Enforcement Programs. Based on this evaluation, PHMSA determined that enforcement of the Washington State excavation damage prevention law is “adequate.”¹

As a reminder, PHMSA requests that each State continue to review its laws, definitions of “excavation,” and relevant best practices to determine whether onshore submerged facilities, dredging, and other related maritime or underwater excavation activities are included. This request is based on recommendations from the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) after a 16-inch liquid propane pipeline was damaged by a dredging vessel on August 21, 2020.² Please ensure that your State has the legal authority and procedures in place to preserve public safety during dredging operations and other related maritime or underwater excavation activities.

PHMSA appreciates your dedication to pipeline safety. As you are aware, excavation damage remains 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, thereby enhancing public safety.

¹ PHMSA will only deem a state as either “adequate” or “inadequate.”

² See NTSB Report MAR21/05 dated December 7, 2021, *Hazardous Liquid Pipeline Strike and Subsequent Explosion and Fire aboard Dredging Vessel Waymon Boyd*

Chair Rybarik

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Should you or your staff have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Mr. David Appelbaum, Senior Transportation Specialist, PHMSA, at (202) 617-6329 or by email at David.Appelbaum@dot.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Zach Barrett", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Zach Barrett
Director, State Programs

Cc: Ms. Marina Rathbun, Operations Manager, Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission
Mr. Scott Rukke, Director, Pipeline Safety Division, Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission
Mr. Dennis Ritter, Pipeline Safety Program Manager - Acting Director, Pipeline Safety Division, Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission