



U.S. Department of Transportation  
**Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety  
Administration**  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

**DATE 04/21/2026**

**MEMO TO FILE**

**From:** Carolyn Nelson, P.E.  
**Director of Environmental Analysis & Compliance Division**  
carolyn.nelson@dot.gov

**Subject:** **Categorical Exclusion Determination**  
**Pipeline Safety: Editorial Correction to Requirements for Low-Stress**  
**Hazardous Liquid Pipelines in Rural Areas**

#### **FINAL ACTION**

In this final rule, PHMSA is making editorial corrections and non-substantive changes to the requirements for assessing newly identified unusually sensitive areas for low-stress pipelines in rural areas. Specifically, PHMSA is revising 49 CFR 195.12(e)(1)(ii) to correct an erroneous citation that identifies when operators are required to complete baseline assessments. Section 195.12(e)(1)(ii) requires operators to complete the baseline assessment required by paragraph (c)(1)(iii)(C) or (c)(2)(iii)(C) of § 195.12, as appropriate, according to the schedule set forth in § 195.452(d)(3). Since § 195.452(d)(3) does not exist, PHMSA is revising § 195.12(e)(1)(ii) to correct the citation. Operators should complete their baseline assessments, as appropriate, according to the schedule set forth in § 195.452(d).

#### **APPLICABLE CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION**

Categorical exclusions (CE) are categories of actions that the agency has determined normally do not significantly affect the quality of the human environment and therefore do not require either an environmental assessment (EA) or an environmental impact statement (EIS). [DOT Order 5610.1D](#), DOT's current National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) procedures, notes in paragraph 9(f) that "[a]n OA may apply a CE established in another OA's procedures." PHMSA coordinated with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to determine that the following FHWA CE is applicable to the action described above and can be used by PHMSA per Section 9(f) of DOT Order 5610.1D:

*Promulgation of rules, regulations, and directives.*<sup>1</sup>

#### **UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

---

<sup>1</sup> 23 CFR 771.117(c)(20)

Based on the scope of the action, PHMSA has determined that this rulemaking action does not meet the criteria for unusual circumstances listed in 23 CFR 771.117(b), which would require PHMSA to conduct appropriate environmental studies to determine if the CE classification is proper.

**DETERMINATION**

PHMSA analyzed the final rule and determined that the rulemaking will not adversely affect safety and will not significantly affect the quality of the human and natural environment. Based on the information provided in the final rule, including a review of unusual circumstances, PHMSA finds the final action qualifies as a Categorical Exclusion in accordance with Section 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. § 4332, DOT Order 5610.1D, Departmentwide National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures, and 23 CFR 771.

**Approved by the Environmental Analysis and Compliance Division:**

---