

Voluntary Information-sharing Workgroup  
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**Speech as Written for Delivery by  
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U.S. Department of Transportation**

**Voluntary Information-Sharing Workgroup (VIS WG)**

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## **Introduction**

Thank you for your kind introduction.

I am delighted to join you today at the Voluntary Information-sharing System Working Group meeting.

It's exciting to see such a diverse group of pipeline safety stakeholders coming together to develop recommendations for a voluntary information-sharing system to improve safety across the pipeline industry.

I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome our new members – Mr. Michael Bellamy, General Manager for PII Pipeline Solutions, a subsidiary of General Electric; and Mr. Randy Parker, Vice President of Regulatory Affairs for Kinder Morgan Inc.

I know that you will be valuable members of this group.

I'd also like to thank all returning VIS working group members. As always, PHMSA is incredibly grateful for your support.

In this meeting, the committee will have an opportunity to learn from the data- and information-sharing efforts of

- the Federal Aviation Administration,
- the Federal Railroad Administration, and
- the Bureau of Transportation and Statistics.

I believe that these discussions will help to craft a robust strategic mission statement that will ultimately lead to the development of innovative ways for us to share information, lessons learned, and best practices across industry.

As technology evolves, it is vital that we continue to work together to identify effective and innovative solutions to address pipeline safety risks.

I applaud your dedication and commitment to this crucial work and thank you for the time you have spent in advancing this important mandate.

As you know, PHMSA's goal is to promote the safe, reliable, and environmentally sound operation of the nation's 2.7-million-mile pipeline transportation system and the nearly one million daily shipments of hazardous materials by land, sea, and air.

The reach of PHMSA's safety effort is vast – it stretches from the U.S. Virgin Islands to the Alaskan tundra and all the way to the Pacific Islands.

And I am humbled by the dedication of our 536 hardworking safety professionals.

This dedication is evinced by the 99.97 percent safety record we share.

But we need to improve even more.

And while we should all be proud of the amazing safety achievements over the last 20 years, our focus now must be on the future and that last few hundredths of a percentage point that will get us to that aspirational – but I do believe achievable – goal of zero incidents.

## **Your Background**

I was sworn in as PHMSA Administrator about a month ago and came to PHMSA from the freight rail industry, where I focused on public safety, the environment, occupational health, and hazardous materials transportation safety and security.

After a wonderful 40-year career, I retired from CSX Transportation in Jacksonville, Florida, in March of this year.

Now, I will pause here because I'm guessing that at least some of you are wondering why I would un-retire and leave sunny Florida to go to work in the federal government?

Well, there are three reasons:

First. I truly do believe that if you are asked to serve this great nation of ours, you should – if you can – make that commitment.

Second. I was excited for the opportunity to expand my years of work, dedication and commitment to improving the safe transportation of hazardous materials by rail to the entire pipeline and surface transportation network in this country.

Third. I believe that my hopes of achieving new levels of safety is something we can, and must do – together.

Harnessing the collective experience within this room into a laser-like focus can, I believe, be the catalyst for delivering even greater improvements in the safe transportation of hazardous materials and energy-related products, both by pipeline and other modes of transportation.

As I was going through the PHMSA selection process, I was deeply impressed with Secretary Chao's commitment to safety. And I fully support her clear vision for investing in infrastructure while driving innovation and technology, thereby improving the safety and performance of our nation's transportation system.

### **Secretary Chao's 2018 Priorities**

Infrastructure is the backbone of our economy.

It keeps our country moving and raises the standard of living for all Americans, including workers who are employed in the vast pipeline industry.

At the DOT, we are guided by Secretary Chao's three main priorities, which are:

- Maintaining and strengthening safety using sound science and risk-based analysis;
- Rebuilding and refurbishing our country's critical infrastructure; and
- Creating a regulatory environment that fosters innovation.

In my Senate confirmation hearing, I said that – if confirmed as PHMSA's administrator – I would push to explore how technology can be deployed to enhance the safety of pipelines and other forms of transportation.

I will also encourage research and development efforts that will improve, create, and apply cutting-edge technology to safety solutions.

When we look at the Secretary's priorities, as well as what I think we can achieve through technology and R&D, it's evident that even though we come from different backgrounds, we all share the same forward-looking commitment to helping PHMSA fulfill its safety mission.

## **Voluntary Information-sharing System Working Group**

The pipeline safety reauthorization bill, the 2016 PIPES Act, established the Voluntary Information-sharing System working Group – the VIS WG - which is comprised of stakeholders from a variety of backgrounds yet with the same passion I share for pipeline safety.

The work of this group can deliver further improvements in gas transmission and hazardous liquid pipeline facility integrity risk analysis, through inspection information feedback and information sharing.

The VIS WG will encourage advanced pipeline inspection technology development, as well as the sharing of pipeline inspection information and other data, thereby spreading knowledge about the advantages and disadvantages of various types of in-line inspection technologies.

And it will work to protect safety-sensitive, security-sensitive, and proprietary information by creating a secure system that safeguards data while encouraging information-sharing and the development of advanced pipeline inspection technologies.

As a whole, the VIS WG's work will improve safety throughout the pipeline industry.

## **Conclusion**

In closing, I want to personally thank you for supporting industry-wide information sharing.

It's clear that the VIS WG will support safety in pipeline systems throughout the United States, helping to fill gaps in pipeline safety by promoting transparency, collaboration, and the adoption of Safety Management Systems.

This group's critical work will inform integrity risk analysis through information sharing and inspection information feedback.

While a great deal of work still lies ahead, I look forward to this group's discussion and development of a strategic mission statement that will ultimately set the framework for the recommendations provided to the Secretary.

I appreciate your commitment to pipeline safety and for coming to the D.C. area to discuss how to share pipeline safety information.

Again, thank you.

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