



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

Administrator

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE.
Washington, DC 20590

May 16, 2019

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chairman, Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Chairman:

House Report 115-750 requested the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) to provide a report to Congress on PHMSA's Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 staffing and hiring plans as well as actual turnover and hiring in FY 2018 for the Office of Pipeline Safety within 120 days after enactment of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2019 (Public Law 116-6). I have enclosed PHMSA's 2019 Office of Pipeline Safety staffing and hiring plan and the Office of Pipeline Safety's actual turnover and hiring in FY 2018.

PHMSA continues to work towards full employment of 308 Pipeline Safety personnel. Pipeline Safety inspectors typically are engineers, who are difficult to recruit and retain when the economy creates a high demand for these positions. There is often competition with the higher paying private sector—including pipeline operators and other energy sector employers—for this highly skilled workforce. In FY 2019, PHMSA continues to implement creative hiring solutions, such as veterans outreach, multiple concurrent announcements, and partnerships with universities and their engineering departments. These creative hiring solutions have decreased turnover from 7.9% in FY 2017 to 4.8% in FY 2018. Furthermore, PHMSA has added 6 (20 hires less 14 separations) new Pipeline Safety employees net of turnover, increasing the staff from 291 to 297 with only 11 vacancies remaining to reach 308 positions. PHMSA will continue to use innovative recruitment tools and hiring events to complete the hiring in FY 2019 as described in the report.

I have sent similar letters to the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Senate Committee on Appropriations; Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Committee on Appropriations; the Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies; and the Ranking Member of the Senate Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies. If you need further information or assistance, please feel free to call me or have your staff

The Honorable Susan Collins
Page 2

contact Bobby Fraser, Director of the Office of Governmental, International and Public Affairs, by phone at 202-366-9414 or by e-mail at Bobby.Fraser@dot.gov.

Sincerely,



Howard R. Elliott

Enclosures



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1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE.
Washington, DC 20590

May 16, 2019

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
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United States Senate
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The Honorable Richard Shelby
Page 2

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Sincerely,

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Howard R. Elliott

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1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE.
Washington, DC 20590

May 16, 2019

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Granger:

House Report 115-750 requested the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) to provide a report to Congress on PHMSA's Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 staffing and hiring plans as well as actual turnover and hiring in FY 2018 for the Office of Pipeline Safety within 120 days after enactment of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2019 (Public Law 116-6). I have enclosed PHMSA's 2019 Office of Pipeline Safety staffing and hiring plan and the Office of Pipeline Safety's actual turnover and hiring in FY 2018.

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The Honorable Kay Granger
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1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE.
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May 16, 2019

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Leahy:

House Report 115-750 requested the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) to provide a report to Congress on PHMSA's Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 staffing and hiring plans as well as actual turnover and hiring in FY 2018 for the Office of Pipeline Safety within 120 days after enactment of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2019 (Public Law 116-6). I have enclosed PHMSA's 2019 Office of Pipeline Safety staffing and hiring plan and the Office of Pipeline Safety's actual turnover and hiring in FY 2018.

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The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
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1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE.
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May 16, 2019

The Honorable David E. Price
Chairman, Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

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1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE.
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May 16, 2019

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Reed:

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The Honorable Jack Reed

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1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE.
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May 16, 2019

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Chairwoman:

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The Honorable Nita Lowey
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1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE.
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May 16, 2019

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Diaz-Balart:

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The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
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**Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA)
Report to Congress on the Office of Pipeline Safety
FY 2018 Hiring Actuals and FY 2019 Hiring Plan**

FY 2018 Actual Turnover and Hiring:

In FY 2018, the Office of Pipeline Safety staffing increased from 292 full-time personnel on October 1, 2017, to 297 full-time personnel on September 30, 2018. PHMSA hired 20 Pipeline Safety employees. Of these 20 hires, 13 were inspectors and 7 were other safety staff. In the same period, 14 employees left the Office of Pipeline Safety, resulting in a net increase of 6 employees. The turnover rate was 4.8 percent, using an average number of 290 employees.

FY 2018 Pipeline Safety Staffing and Turnover

Onboard October 1, 2017¹	Hiring FY 2018	Separations FY 2018	Onboard September 30, 2018	Turnover Rate FY 2018²
291	20	(14)	297	4.8%

1/ The Onboard October 1, 2017 count of 291 reflects an adjustment to correct the number of employees onboard at the start of the year.

2/ Turnover calculated using the number of separations divided by the average number of Pipeline Safety employees onboard of 290 in FY 2018.

Pipeline Safety Hiring Plan:

In FY 2018, PHMSA’s Office of Pipeline Safety received funding for 308 Pipeline Safety positions. As of September 30, 2018, the Office of Pipeline Safety had 297 (96 percent) of its positions filled. Of the 297 persons onboard, 144 were inspectors; of the 11 vacancies, 8 were inspector positions.

PHMSA undertook a comprehensive workforce planning effort in 2018 to evaluate the current workforce at a strategic level and to determine future supply and demand needs, as well as strategies for taking action over the next three years. This FY19 Strategic Workforce Plan incorporates PHMSA’s strategic priorities and guidance from DOT strategic documents, including the requirements provided in DOT’s Strategic Workforce Planning Guidance.

PHMSA leadership recognizes that while the organization has implemented some foundational elements of workforce management and the overall workforce is staffed with skilled professionals, the tendency in agency workforce planning has been more reactive than proactive. This is evident from under-developed succession plans, inconsistent hiring results, increased turnover, and limited analysis and forecasting of the workforce. The three high-level strategies to supplement and expand capabilities and address these gaps are:

1. Expand and enhance PHMSA’s recruitment and hiring plans;
2. Conduct operational workforce planning and workload analysis by program office; and
3. Implement succession planning and develop leadership and staff.

As part of the ensuing action plan, PHMSA leaders and hiring managers will become stewards of the strategic workforce planning effort through exposure to, and training in, workforce planning processes, especially given that the current focus on managing internal resources is regarded as crucial to sustained effectiveness. Configuring and managing a workforce that is accessible, skilled, motivated, and efficiently deployed—per strategies aligned with PHMSA’s mission and priorities—will increasingly be a point of accomplishment for every manager. This plan will be a key differentiator in our collective performance and success. Through implementation, PHMSA will be positioned to respond to emerging challenges and responsibilities, improve overall mission effectiveness and efficiency, and engage with an informed, energized workforce.

PHMSA will take a variety of actions to prepare the current workforce for future challenges, acquire new staff to supplement and expand capabilities, and manage any identified surpluses. Specifically, PHMSA will implement the following strategies in FY 2019 to accomplish these goals:

1. Expand use of Direct Hiring Authority for pipeline safety positions that qualify as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math positions eligible for these flexibilities. This hiring authority is made available through OPM guidance (October 2018).
2. Analyze the need for Direct Hire Authority and if determined there is a critical hiring need or severe shortage, submit the request to the Office of Personnel Management for pipeline safety positions.
3. Invest in Federal Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math education programs for filling pipeline safety engineering positions.
4. Explore creating or leveraging an existing Federal STEM education program (e.g., the Department of Defense SMART program) that improves recruitment and retention practices aimed at candidates in the engineering field.
5. Review current PHMSA Mission Critical Occupations and develop hiring strategies around each.
6. Implement succession planning for pipeline engineers, subject matter experts, and key leadership positions.