

Inspection Activity Glossary

PHMSA's Office of Pipeline Safety performs a variety of inspections, investigations, and other activities to assure safe pipeline operation and full operator compliance with all pipeline safety regulations. The terms contained in this glossary are used in the tables accompanying the "Inspection Activity" reports. Some of these terms represent multiple PHMSA activities which have been combined for the purposes of this report.

Note: Beginning around 2008, PHMSA began to overhaul its pipeline inspection regimen, introducing a new inspection process that integrated several of its individual inspection types in order to better focus its inspection resources on higher risk facilities and areas of concern. Prior to this change, PHMSA's inspection regimen consisted exclusively of a series of individual inspection types which covered different parts of their regulations. Since this change, these individual inspection types are still used on a situational basis, but typically PHMSA now employs the new integrated inspection process, consisting of an Integrated Program Inspection and a series of Integrated Field Inspections covering a pipeline system. As a result of PHMSA's transition from individual inspections to integrated inspections, the distribution of various inspection types reflected in these "Inspection Activity" reports changes after this timeframe.

Site-Specific Field Inspections

Site-Specific Field Inspections include inspections and other compliance-related activities conducted at specific facilities or along specific lengths of pipelines. These inspections/activities include on-site field verification of an operator's implementation of procedures and programs associated with corrosion control; pipeline inspection, testing, and repairs; emergency safety devices and remote instrumentation; right-of-way marking; valve operability; equipment maintenance; interaction with emergency services officials; participation in One-Call Systems; personnel training and qualification; emergency response preparedness; and other pipeline safety and compliance tasks.

Integrated Field Inspection - This portion of an integrated inspection combines individual site-specific and certain targeted inspection types (e.g., Specialized Field and Unit Inspections and Integrity Management and Operator Qualification Field Verifications, along with Compliance/Safety Issue Follow-Ups and Other Targeted Inspections) into a set of coordinated inspections to evaluate the field implementation of an operator's safety programs at various sites over a pipeline system. This inspection provides a holistic evaluation of an operator's execution of its written procedures in the field.

Specialized Field Inspection - This inspection includes on-site field verification of all or selected portions of an operator's corrosion control practices; pipeline inspection, testing, and repairs; repair, calibration, and maintenance of emergency safety devices and remote instrumentation; adequacy of right-of-way marking; valve accessibility and operability; repair and maintenance of pumps, compressors, and associated equipment and instrumentation; interaction and involvement with emergency services officials; participation in and use of One-Call Systems; personnel training and qualification; emergency and spill response planning and preparedness; and field compliance with other pipeline safety requirements, such as when pipeline service changes or when flow is reversed.

Unit Inspection - This inspection, similar to a Specialized Field Inspection, was a type of pipeline inspection utilized prior to PHMSA's integrated inspection regimen. This term derives from its coverage of individual pipeline facilities or lengths of pipeline called "Inspection Units". Unit Inspections are sometimes also referred to by PHMSA as Standard Inspections.

Integrity Management Field Verification - This inspection includes on-site field verification that procedures for conducting integrity assessments are followed, that pipeline excavation and repair activities were performed in accordance with regulations and applicable procedures, and that preventive and mitigative measures identified by the operator's integrity management program have been performed as prescribed in the operator's plans and procedures.

Operator Qualification Field Verification - This inspection includes on-site field verification that properly qualified and trained individuals are performing operating, maintenance, and emergency response functions and tasks, that records demonstrating that the individuals' qualifications are current and accurate, and that field personnel understand and are cognizant of abnormal operating and emergency conditions.

Spill Response Drill - This activity involves an on-site assessment of and participation in spill and emergency response drills, tabletop exercises, response planning meetings, and other emergency response and preparedness activities, oftentimes coordinated with other Federal, State, and local officials.

System-Wide Program Inspections

System-Wide Program Inspections include inspections and other compliance-related activities that cover pipeline safety programs and processes that apply broadly across an operator's entire pipeline system or network of pipeline facilities. These inspections/activities include those which cover: operating, maintenance, and emergency procedures; integrity management, operator qualification, control room management, public awareness, and damage prevention programs; spill preparedness and response planning; and, procedures, processes, and plans covering other pipeline safety and compliance activities.

Integrated Program Inspection - This portion of an integrated inspection combines individual system-wide program inspection types (Specialized Program Inspections, Integrity Management Inspections, and Operator Qualification Inspections) into a single set of coordinated inspections that evaluate an operator's safety programs, targeting both written procedures and program implementation at headquarters and other office locations. This inspection provides a holistic evaluation of an operator's written plans and procedures.

Specialized Program Inspection - An inspection of all or selected portions of an operator's normal, abnormal, and emergency operations and maintenance (O&M) procedures; control room management procedures; public awareness and damage prevention procedures; and, other system-wide programs and procedures. These inspections are also conducted to review an operator's plans and procedures when pipeline service changes or when flow is reversed.

Integrity Management Inspection - An inspection of an operator's Integrity Management Program, consisting of a comprehensive review of an operator's integrity management and risk assessment program and processes, and its testing, inspection, and repair plans and results.

Operator Qualification Inspection - An inspection of an operator's program to qualify personnel for certain safety-sensitive tasks associated with operation and maintenance of their pipelines. These inspections provide a comprehensive review of the operator's qualification program and processes, including the identification of all safety-sensitive tasks, the identification of individuals qualified to perform certain tasks, and the conduct of employee performance evaluations to assure proper performance of identified tasks.

Targeted Inspections/Investigations

Targeted Inspections/Investigations include inspections, investigations, and other activities related to specific pipeline safety issues or concerns, or areas which have been targeted for special review or emphasis. These inspections/activities include failure investigations, follow-up activities for identified compliance or safety issues, investigations into public concerns or complaints, new construction inspections, drug and alcohol program inspections, and other special-focus inspections or investigations.

Failure Investigation - An investigation performed following a pipeline failure to determine the cause of the release and any violations of the pipeline safety regulations that may have contributed to the failure.

Compliance/Safety Issue Follow-Up - Follow-up activities associated with Special Permits, Corrective Action Orders, Consent Orders, Safety Orders, and other PHMSA enforcement actions, as well as PHMSA investigations of operator safety-related condition reports and concerns raised by members of the public.

Construction Inspection - An inspection of a new pipeline construction project designed to assure the pipeline or facility is constructed, installed, and tested in accordance with applicable pipeline safety regulations and standards prior to its being placed in operation.

Drug & Alcohol Inspection - An inspection of an operator's drug and alcohol testing program designed to assure compliance with DOT and PHMSA's Drug & Alcohol Testing regulations and standards under 49 CFR Parts 40 and 199, respectively.

Other Inspection - Various inspections focused on other specifically targeted and specialized areas of operator compliance and safety performance such as damage prevention, site security, and other inspections where it is determined that a more intensive, in-depth inspection of a particular geographical area, pipeline system, or compliance area is warranted.