in this proceeding and because more than three weeks remain in that period, we are not extending the date for the filing of replies in response to the above-referenced late-filed comments.

5. Accordingly, *it is ordered* that the motions of CBS, Inc., Telecommunications Research and Action Center and the Office of Communication of the United Church of Christ for acceptance of late-filed comments in this proceeding *are granted.* In addition, *it is ordered,* that the late-filed comments of the United States Catholic Conference in this *proceeding are accepted.* This action is taken pursuant to authority provided in section 4(i) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, and § 0.283 of the Commission's rules.

6. For further information concerning this proceeding, contact Eugenia R. Hull, (202) 632–6302.

Federal Communications Commission

Alex D. Felker,

Chief, Mass Media Bureau

[FR Doc. 88–7253 Filed 4–1–88; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Research and Special Programs Administration

49 CFR Part 192

[Docket PS–100 Notice 1]

Gas Detection and Monitoring in Compressor Station Buildings

AGENCY: Research and Special Programs Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM).

SUMMARY: This ANPRM requests specific information to determine the need for additional regulations to require gas monitoring and alarm systems and automatically-controlled ventilation systems in compressor buildings or for more specific Operations and Maintenance (O&M) procedures for such buildings.

DATES: Interested parties are invited to submit comments by June 3, 1988. Late filed comments will be considered so far as is practicable.

ADDRESSES: Send comments in duplicate to the Dockets Unit, Room 8417, Office of Pipeline Safety, Research and Special Programs Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, 400 Seventh Street SW., Washington, DC 20590. Identify the docket and notice numbers stated in the heading of this notice. All comments and docketed material will be available for inspection and copying in Room 8426 between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. each business day.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Bernard Liebler, (202) 366–2392, regarding the subject matter of this document, or the Dockets Unit, (202) 366–5046, for copies of this document or other material in the docket.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

On December 8, 1982, an explosion occurred in The Trunkline Gas Company's (Trunkline) Compressor Building B at their Bonicord, Tennessee facility. Three Trunkline employees were killed, two others were seriously injured, and the compressor building was severely damaged. An investigation by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) found eight gas leaks in the gasketed valve covers of the compressor prime mover, a 10,000-hp Cooper-Bessemer engine.

The explosion occurred after the five Trunkline employees tightened the gasketed valve covers on the engine and then successfully started the engine after several attempts. The engine was operating for a brief period several days before the accident and showed no signs of leakage at the valve cover. However, according to maintenance records, valve cover leaks had been detected on two occasions.

The building in which the accident occurred was equipped with roof louvers as a means of ventilation. The louvers were designed to fail closed if the manual adjustment cable broke. The NTSB investigation concluded that the louvers had been set in a position that would permit leaking gas in the building to accumulate. The building was not equipped with a gas detector. Installation of a gas detection system had been planned but not accomplished.

The NTSB concluded that the explosion was caused by the ignition of the gas leaking from the valve-cover gaskets by an undetermined ignition source. As a result they presented the following Safety Recommendation to RSPA:

> Amend 49 CFR § 192.173, regarding compressor station building ventilation systems equipped with restrictive devices, to require the installation of gas detection equipment that will alert employees to hazardous gas accumulations and automatically open fully all restrictive devices when accumulations of gas are detected. (P–83–20)

OPS has examined leak reports pertaining to incidents at compressor stations between 1982 and 1986, inclusive. The examination revealed 42 reports of incidents of gas leakage that either definitely or probably occurred inside compressor buildings. Of those 42, 17 resulted in fires with 8 of those being accompanied by explosions. Of these 17, 3 resulted in injuries (8) and one in fatalities (2). (The Bonicord incident resulted in the 2 fatalities and 3 of the 8 injuries. The numbers listed above, 3 fatalities and 2 injuries, differ because one person initially listed as injured on the leak report filed with OPS later succumbed.) None of the circumstances described in the other reports were sufficiently similar to the events at Bonicord such that the measures recommended by NTSB would likely have been effective in preventing those events. However, the frequency of incidents involving compressor buildings is significant and forms the basis for this rulemaking.

Discussion

Section 192.173 currently requires ventilation of each compressor station building readied for service after the effective date of the regulation. Section 192.173 provides that the ventilation must "ensure that employees are not endangered by the accumulation of gas in rooms, sumps, attics, pits, or other enclosed places." Under these rules, a properly designed, adjusted, and maintained ventilation system at Bonicord would likely have been adequate to prevent the hazardous gas accumulation. However, the gas standards do not require backup protection if the ventilation system fails to prevent the accumulation of gas. The deaths and injuries at Bonicord might have been avoided if there had been an indicator to warn the Trunkline workers of the existence of the hazardous gas. Either gas odorization or a gas monitoring and alarm system could potentially have provided that warning.

Since § 192.173 applies to the design of compressor buildings, the NTSB recommendation would apply only to buildings placed in service in the future. Since compressor buildings are not frequently constructed, OPS believes that limiting this rulemaking to future construction would have minimal benefit in solving any problem that now exists. Therefore, this ANPRM addresses several alternatives that would apply to all compressor buildings including those currently in service.

OPS is also concerned that automatic opening of restrictive ventilation devices might, by rapid ventilation, mitigate or nullify the effectiveness of a Halon or foam fire suppression system. However, OPS is similarly concerned that a ventilation system designed to fail

closed could result in the accumulation of a hazardous gas concentration were it to do so while gas is leaking in the building. In the context of this proceeding, OPS is interpreting the term "restrictive device" as used in the NTSB recommendation to mean a passive ventilation system for which the effective ventilation area can be adjusted mechanically.

Most of the gas in transmission pipelines is not odorized. In these cases, employees entering a compressor building containing a hazardous gas concentration cannot smell the leaking gas. Thus, the safety of a compressor building's atmosphere cannot be verified without additional external means, such as a portable gas detector or a permanent gas detector with an alarm. The Department's safety standards for hazardous liquid pipelines require that pump station buildings (which present risks similar to those presented by gas compressor station buildings) be constructed to include both ventilation and devices warning occupants of the presence of hazardous vapors (49 CFR 195.262 (a)).

To ensure the effectiveness of portable gas detectors, it would be necessary to include in the operator's operating and maintenance (O&M) plan procedures requiring their use verifying the absence of a combustible gas mixture before entering a compressor building. Permanently installed and alarmed detectors would not require such additions to the O&M plan. OPS has several available alternatives that could be applied individually or in combination:

1. Require operators to equip new and existing compressor buildings handling unodorized gas with continuously operating gas monitoring systems that will activate an alarm whenever a gas-in-air mixture above an established threshold is detected. The alarm would be capable of warning personnel of the presence of a flammable mixture prior to entering the building.

2. Require operators to equip new and existing compressor buildings handling unodorized gas with restrictive ventilation devices that open automatically upon detection of a hazardous gas accumulation and fail safe.

3. Revise § 192.605, Essentials of operating and maintenance plan, to include specific procedures for checking the atmosphere inside compressor buildings handling unodorized gas before entering such buildings.

4. Revise § 192.605, Essentials of operating and maintenance plan, to include requirements to maintain compressor building restrictive ventilation devices.

5. Do not revise the regulations.

Alternatives 1 and 2 appear initially to be the most effective, because they require the least action on the part of the employee. A properly designed alarm should be obvious to an employe who intends to enter a compressor building. Of course, the employe could then ignore the alarm, but such action is not in the employe's self-interest and is probably contrary to the operator's standard procedures. This alternative, however, could be expensive if a large number of compressor stations would require the installation of gas monitoring and alarm systems. OPS does not have sufficient information about the prevalence of gas monitoring and alarm systems in compressor buildings or the cost of installing such systems to conclude whether Alternative 1 would be expensive to implement.

Alternative 2 is similar to Alternative 1, since it would require a continuous gas monitoring system to initiate automatic venting of unanticipated gas accumulations. OPS is concerned about several aspects of this alternative, including the effect of its operation on fire protection/suppression systems (e.g., Halon), the benefits, if any, of the fail-safe feature, and the costs of implementation.

The third and fourth alternatives would not require investment in hardware to the same degree as the first two. They would rely on the creation of effective procedures for safe entry into compressor buildings or for maintenance of restrictive ventilation devices. Furthermore, each would depend on adherence to those procedures for full effectiveness. However, there would still be costs associated with these options in terms of procedure revision and distribution and employe education.

The final alternative would not impose further restrictions or requirements on operators. The effectiveness of this approach would depend on several factors. The primary factor being how widespread is the existence in the industry of monitored compressor buildings, standard operating procedures requiring that employees check the atmosphere of a compressor building before entry, and standard operating procedures requiring regular maintenance of compressor building restrictive ventilation devices.

Request for Information

To assist OPS in deciding which of the alternatives to implement, interested parties are invited to participate in this rulemaking by providing answers to the following questions and submitting relevant information:

1. (a) Are gas monitoring systems commonly installed in compressor buildings? Why, or why not?

(b) Are they used for automatic control of restrictive ventilation devices, e.g., louvers?

(c) Are such ventilation devices designed to fail safe?

(d) At what gas accumulation level are such alarms and controls set to operate?

2. (a) Where gas monitoring and alarm systems are not now installed in compressor buildings, what would be the cost of installing such systems, both unit and aggregate?

(b) What would be the added cost of including automatic control of restrictive ventilation devices designed for fail-safe operation?

(c) Are there any technical or operational difficulties that would prevent or make excessively difficult the installation of gas monitoring and alarm systems or automatic ventilation control systems in all compressor buildings?

3. (a) Do operator procedures require personnel normally to check for hazardous gas accumulations before entering compressor buildings?

(b) What follow-up action do they require when hazardous gas accumulations are detected?

4. (a) What procedures are followed in maintaining ventilation systems in compressor station buildings?

(b) How frequently is maintenance performed?

5. (a) Which of the first four alternatives or combination thereof would provide the most cost-effective means for preventing loss of life from incidents in compressor station buildings?

(b) Should the application of the selected alternative be limited, as suggested, to compressor stations handling unodorized gas?

Commenters are not limited to filing comments only on the questions presented above and may submit any facts and views consistent with the intent of this notice. In addition, commenters are encouraged to provide comments on (1) "major rule" considerations under the terms of Executive Order 12291; (2) "significant rule considerations under the terms of

DOT regulatory procedures (44 FR 11034); (3) potential environmental impacts subject to the National Environmental Policy Act; (4) information collection burdens that must be reviewed under the Paperwork Reduction Act; (5) the economic impact on small entities under the Regulatory Flexibility Act; and (6) impacts on Federalism under Executive Order 12612.

Authority: 49 App. U.S.C. 1672 and 1804; 49b CFR 1.53; Appendix A of Part 1 and App. A of Part 106.

Issued in Washington, DC, March 30, 1988.

Richard L. Beam,

Director, Office of Pipeline Safety.

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