

Public Awareness Program FAQs
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Q1. When must programs be complete?

A1. As stated in 192.616(h) and 195.440(h), written programs must be completed by June 20, 2006 (except for small master meter and propane operators). Under the “Comment Discussion” section of the Final Rule (pg 28839) the statement is made that “operators must be prepared to submit completed programs no later than 12 months following the publication date”, which would require completed programs by May 19, 2006. However, the date specified in the regulations overrides the due date described in the “Comment Discussion” portion of the Final Rule. Public awareness programs must be completed by June 20, 2006, except for operators of propane distribution systems serving less than 25 customers and master meter operators serving less than 25 customers. These operators have until June 20, 2007 to complete their programs. PHMSA intends to modify the public awareness requirements for all master meter operators and certain propane operators, as described in A2. below.

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Q2. Does PHMSA plan to limit the compliance requirements for gas distribution systems operated by persons, other than municipalities, whose primary activity does not include the transportation of gas by pipeline?

A2. Yes. PHMSA intends to propose a rulemaking to allow all master meter operators and propane distribution operators, whose primary business is not the transportation of gas by pipeline, to comply with 192.616 by providing its customers the Baseline Messages for LDC Customers, at the Baseline Frequency, found in Table 2-2 of API RP 1162. PHMSA’s proposed rulemaking would exempt these operators from awareness requirements for emergency officials, local public officials, and excavators.

Q3. What constitutes a complete program?

A3. A description of a completed program is contained in section 7.1 of RP 1162.

Q4. When must an operator complete the initial distribution of RP 1162-compliant communications to each stakeholder audience.

A4. The answer depends on the RP 1162 frequency for communicating with the audience. A “base date” of June 20, 2006 applies to all operator types and audiences. The initial distribution of awareness materials must be completed by the “base date” plus the RP 1162 frequency. For example, gas distribution operators must deliver awareness materials to Customers by December 20, 2006. All operator types must deliver awareness materials to Local Public Officials by June 20, 2009.

Q5. Must an operator continue awareness programs currently being implemented in response to damage prevention (192.614 & 195.442) and emergency officials (192.615 & 195.402) regulations.

A5. An operator must continue to implement its current public awareness activities to comply with Sections 192.614-616 and 195.440, 442, and 402 until it transitions to a new Public Awareness Program.

Q6. Are operators required to sample stakeholder audience awareness levels before June 20, 2006?

A6. No.

Q7. When must an operator complete the first evaluation of program effectiveness?

A7. The first evaluation of program effectiveness must be finished within four years of the date the written Public Awareness Program is completed.

Q8. Can an operator deviate from the baseline program recommendations in RP 1162?

A8. Yes, however, the operator must justify why an alternative public awareness activity, frequency, or delivery method achieves an equivalent level of safety awareness with the stakeholder audience as compared to the recommendations outlined in API RP 1162.

Q9. Must a public awareness program include supplemental elements (enhancements)?

A9. The operator's written Public Awareness Program must describe its process and procedure for determining whether supplemental enhancements are warranted. Operators should consider relevant factors as described in Section 6.2 of API RP 1162 that may prompt supplemental measures to be undertaken.

Q10. Must an operator's program specify the portions of the pipeline system where supplemental elements (enhancements) will be implemented?

A10. Through a combination of the written program and implementation records, the operator must identify (and document) areas along the pipeline route where supplemental elements have been implemented. Regarding the written plan, the operator may specify the portions identified for supplemental elements or may specify considerations (as listed in RP 1162) that will trigger the implementation of supplemental elements.

Q11. What is a significant percentage of non-English speaking populations and how can that percentage be determined?

A11. For many years, public education regulations have required operators to make these decisions. RP 1162 does not require operators to change existing methodologies for non-English speaking populations.

Q12. How can gas transmission and hazardous liquids operators reach people who may be present in Places of Congregation (POC)?

A12. One option is to partner with the POC by providing pipeline safety information to the POC with a request to pass the information along to individuals. Examples of how a POC could pass along pipeline safety information include newsletters, bulletins, and bulletin boards.

If a large number of POC are present along the pipeline ROW, an effective strategy may be to implement a mass media campaign to increase the awareness of those who may

congregate. The mass media campaign would need to include all baseline messages for POC, unless the operator determines that a particular message is not necessary for safety.

Q13. If a gas transmission or hazardous liquids operator participates in a mass media campaign, must the operator also send mailings to residents along the ROW?

A13. Maybe.

If the mass media campaign includes all messages recommended for the Affected Public audience, a gas transmission or hazardous liquids operator may decide that a mass media campaign is the best method for raising Affected Public awareness. This represents a deviation from RP 1162, which would need to be justified in the written program. Operators choosing this option must provide details about the geographic areas covered by the mass media campaign.

If the mass media campaign does not include all messages recommended for the Affected Public audience, a gas transmission or hazardous liquids operator must justify in the written plan why this message is not necessary for pipeline safety.

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Q14. Are the RP 1162 supplemental program recommendations for high consequence areas equivalent to the external communications requirements of ASME B31.8S?

A14. Yes. PHMSA Integrity Management (IM) inspection teams will consider high consequence area supplemental enhancements, as described in RP 1162, to meet the IM **external** communications requirements. Operators should note the presence of the public awareness supplemental elements in the IM Plan. Operators are reminded that **internal** IM communications are outside the scope of RP 1162 and must be addressed in the IM Plan.

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Q15. How will PHMSA notify operators to submit written programs?

A15. PHMSA will publish an Advisory Bulletin in the Federal Register. PHMSA will prominently post the Advisory Bulletin on its web site and request that industry trade associations and State pipeline safety agencies help ensure all operators are aware of the Advisory Bulletin. PHMSA strongly encourages operators to use the existing Online Data Entry System (ODES) to submit written programs. For operators unfamiliar with ODES, the system currently allows operators to submit various reports required by pipeline safety regulations. In order to ensure the integrity of data submitted to ODES, each operator must have an Operator Identification Number (Op ID) and PIN. Using ODES will reduce the potential for human error and increase the efficiency of the submittal process. Operators can access ODES, request an Op ID, and request a PIN at:

<http://opsweb.rspa.dot.gov/cfdocs/opsapps/pipes/main.cfm>

Operators will not be able to submit public awareness programs through ODES until the submittal date specified in the upcoming Advisory Bulletin (see Q16. below). Instructions for operators who decide not to submit programs through ODES will be included in the Advisory Bulletin.

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Q16. When will PHMSA request that operators, other than master meter operators and certain propane operators (see A2. above), submit written programs?

A16. Regardless of the date PHMSA requests programs, operators must complete programs by June 20, 2006. Prior to requesting public awareness programs, PHMSA must complete certain federally required administrative actions. The completion dates for these administrative actions are currently uncertain.