

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

P-166

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Forwarded to:

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Washington, D.C. 20590  
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SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

P-80-61 through -65

The National Transportation Safety Board has conducted a study evaluating the management and use by the Department of Transportation (DOT) of its gas pipeline data system. This study examines the types of data collected, how the data system operates, and how it is being used by the DOT in fulfilling its responsibility for promoting public safety regarding gas pipelines. The study also evaluates the changes to the data system that are currently being considered by the DOT and whether further changes are required. 1/

The Safety Board's evaluation found that Materials Transportation Bureau (MTB) staff resources are limited, and that, consequently, use of the pipeline data to direct and focus resources is essential for the effective and efficient administration of the Pipeline Safety Act. The Safety Board concludes, however, that the pipeline data currently collected by the MTB are often inaccurate and are not representative of gas pipeline operators and gas pipeline accidents. Furthermore, the present data system is seldom used by MTB pipeline offices in carrying out their regulatory and enforcement functions. There is little cooperation or coordination regarding the data system between the Safety Data Management Branch and the regulation and enforcement offices. Inadequacies in the data system have been pointed out to the MTB in the past, but the agency has responded slowly to such criticisms, and has been developing new reporting forms for over 6 years. To date, no changes have been implemented.

The Safety Board's study also found that the MTB does not have a pipeline data analysis plan, which the Board believes is necessary to coordinate and direct the MTB's pipeline offices in the use of the data system as a management tool. Development of such a plan must precede revision of the data reporting forms and reporting requirements to guide the selection of data collected and to assure that it is requested in a useable form. The Safety Board concludes that the MTB upper management must make a strong commitment to developing an improved data system and coordinating its use.

1/ For more detailed information, read "Safety Effectiveness Evaluation of the Materials Transportation Bureau's Pipeline Data System" (NTSB-SEE-80-4).

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Materials Transportation Bureau of the Research and Special Programs Administration of the U.S. Department of Transportation:

Develop and publish for public comment a formal data analysis plan for the pipeline data system. (Class II, Priority Action) (P-80-61)

Expedite the proposed creation of an Office of Regulatory Planning and Analysis and define responsibilities for development and management of a pipeline data analysis plan. (Class II, Priority Action) (P-80-62)

Postpone promulgation of proposed, revised pipeline data forms until development of a data analysis plan and coordination of the forms with the plan. (Class II, Priority Action) (P-80-63)

Develop explicit directions for completion of the present data forms to improve the quality of the information collected on these forms. Assure that terms not universally accepted across the pipeline industry are defined. (Class II, Priority Action) (P-80-64)

Train existing personnel to more effectively validate incoming leak report forms. (Class II, Priority Action) (P-80-65)

KING, Chairman, GOLDMAN and BURSLEY, Members, concurred in these recommendations. DRIVER, Vice Chairman, and McADAMS, Member, did not participate.



By: James B. King  
Chairman

*for*