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News

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Contact: Jeannie Layson
Tel: 202-366-4831

PHMSA Moves to Implement Tougher Pipeline Safety Regulations

Seeks public input on doubling maximum civil penalties, amending enforcement procedures

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation’s [Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration](#) is moving forward to implement its new statutory authority to strengthen federal pipeline safety regulations. This notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) is the first step to implement the [Pipeline Safety, Regulatory Certainty, and Job Creation Act of 2011](#), which toughened pipeline safety regulations and PHMSA’s ability to enforce them.

“There are 2.6 million miles of pipeline crisscrossing this nation that impact each and every one of us. Our job at the Department of Transportation is to make sure they operate safely,” said U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. “I encourage the public to provide input on this NPRM as we move forward to improve pipeline safety and hold violators accountable.”

The Act authorizes PHMSA to increase the maximum civil penalty for pipeline safety violations from \$100,000 to \$200,000 per violation per day. In addition, the agency will be able to collect a maximum of \$2,000,000 for a related series of violations, up from \$1,000,000. PHMSA proposes to apply the new maximums in cases that occur after Jan. 3, 2012, the date President Obama signed the act into law.

Proposed amendments to the Pipeline Safety Regulations also include technical changes and other minor corrections, including returning PHMSA’s authority to enforce the provisions of the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, which had been transferred to the Coast Guard during the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security.

PHMSA seeks public comment on these proposed amendments. The NPRM is available in the [Federal Register](#), and comments can be made using the link provided at the top of the notice. All comments must include the agency name and docket number PHMSA-2012-0102 at the beginning of the comment and must be submitted by September 12, 2012. The NPRM also provides instructions for submitting comments by fax or by mail.

Pipeline safety is a top priority at PHMSA. In April 2011, Secretary LaHood issued a [Call to Action](#) on pipeline safety, asking pipeline operators to replace and rehabilitate aging pipelines. PHMSA closed a [record number of enforcement cases](#) in 2011 and is collecting more data about pipelines and stepping up efforts to [educate the public](#) about staying safe around pipelines.

The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration develops and enforces regulations for the safe, reliable, and environmentally sound operation of the nation's 2.6 million mile pipeline transportation system and the nearly 1 million daily shipments of hazardous materials by land, sea, and air. Please visit <http://phmsa.dot.gov> for more information.

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