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PHMSA Posts Record Enforcement Numbers in 2012

Agency holding operators accountable for compliance with safety rules

WASHINGTON – In its push to ensure the nation’s pipeline companies continue to enhance the safety of their systems by investing in necessary improvements, the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration today announced another record year in the number of enforcement actions it has taken against pipeline operators.

PHMSA issued 116 enforcement orders to pipeline operators in 2012, its second highest year, for problems with integrity management programs, qualified personnel, corrosion control, and a number of other possible regulatory violations identified during routine inspections and failure investigations.

“When President Obama signed the 2011 Pipeline Safety Act into law, it strengthened the Department’s ability to help promote a safer, more reliable, and capable American pipeline transportation network,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. “Through a combination of education, preparation, and enforcement, we can all help prevent pipeline accidents.”

PHMSA issues enforcement orders to ensure pipeline operators address safety related issues involving their systems or components, in addition to pinpointing violations of federal pipeline safety regulations. As a result of its enforcement efforts, PHMSA issued a record [\\$8,748,200 in proposed fines in 2012](#), including its highest ever civil penalty case in response to a crude oil pipeline failure in Marshall, Michigan.

“These enforcement numbers are a direct result of improved internal tracking procedures and rigorous investigations and inspections of pipeline facilities by PHMSA field personnel,” said PHMSA Administrator Cynthia Quarterman. “Our job is to ensure pipeline operators comply with federal safety regulations and I am proud of our enforcement achievements over the last four years.”

PHMSA's number of enforcement orders issued in 2012 is just four shy of the agency's single year record in 2011 of 120. Since 2008, PHMSA proposed over \$32 million in civil penalties and issued 509 enforcement orders to pipeline operators, constituting over 52 percent of [all orders issued by the agency since 2002](#).

The Pipeline Safety, Regulatory Certainty, and Job Creation Act of 2011, was signed into law last year by President Obama. The Act doubled the maximum civil penalty amount PHMSA can issue to pipeline operators for violating pipeline safety regulations from \$100,000 to \$200,000 for each violation, and from \$1,000,000 to \$2,000,000 for a related series of violations. The Act also authorizes PHMSA to increase its federal pipeline inspector workforce.

For more information on the U.S. DOT's efforts to improve pipeline safety and awareness, visit: <http://opsweb.phmsa.dot.gov/pipelineforum/>.

The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration develops and enforces regulations for the safe, reliable, and environmentally sound operation of the nation's 2.5 million mile pipeline transportation system and the nearly 1 million daily shipments of hazardous materials by land, sea, and air. PHMSA is one of ten agencies within the U.S. Department of Transportation.

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