

WARNING LETTER

April 27, 2000

CERTIFIED MAIL - RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

**Mr. William Thacker
President
Texas Eastern Products Pipeline Company
2929 Allen Parkway
Houston, TX 77019**

CPF No. 1-2000-5002W

Dear Mr. Thacker:

On January 13, 2000, a representative from the Eastern Region Office of Pipeline Safety (OPS), pursuant to Chapter 601 of 49 United States Code, met with Texas Eastern Products Pipeline Company (TEPPCO) representatives to conduct an investigation into the September 16, 1999, accident that occurred on Line P40 in Tioga County, Pennsylvania.

As a result of the investigation, it appears that you have committed probable violations as noted below of pipeline safety regulations, Title 49, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 195.

The probable violations are as follows:

- 1. Section 195.402(a), in that your procedures for the prevention of accidental ignition, E-410, third paragraph, were not followed in their entirety during the pipe replacement project. These procedures state that “prior to welding or cutting with a torch in or around a structure or area containing pipeline facilities, a thorough check, using an explosive gas indicator, shall be made to determine the possible presence of a combustible gas mixture or flammable liquid and ample fire extinguishers shall be manned and ready for use. Welding and/or cutting shall begin only when safe conditions are indicated and fire extinguishers are manned.”**

Although it was stated during the investigation that combustible gas samples were taken at one point during the project, samples were not taken prior to the final tie-in on the north side of the project. In addition, the procedure also states that the fire extinguishers shall be manned and ready for use. The employee responsible for manning the fire extinguisher did not have the fire extinguisher readied for use and thus causing a delay in extinguishing the fire that resulted from the ignited vapors.

We have reviewed the “Root Cause Analysis Report” and recommendations submitted to OPS by TEPPCO pertaining to this incident. Based upon our review, we concur with the recommendations outlined in this report. In addition, procedures should be modified and training conducted to address any changes in Operations, Maintenance, and Emergency response activities outlined in the recommendations provided by TEPPCO. These recommendations are outlined below:

- 1. One person should be assigned the responsibility for overseeing the entire project and coordinate activities for the project. Also, written maintenance work practices should be developed for each project. This work plan should be reviewed with all employees involved in the project and followed during such work activities.**
- 2. When an operating system has been taken out of service and cut for hot work or while hot work is in progress, the venturis should be manned and the individual manning each venturi must be able to communicate with personnel at the job site.**
- 3. While the system was open, an air compressor was disconnected from a venturi for use at another location. A third air compressor should be made available on all projects to prevent situations like this from occurring in the future.**
- 4. The initial cut on each end of the pipe replacement, regardless of length, should be accomplished by cold cutting the existing pipe. The existing line shall be checked for gas vapors with a gas detector and airflow checked to insure proper operation of the venturis.**
- 5. The welder should flash the ditch and open pipe prior to entering the ditch, even if it was checked with a gas detector. He is also responsible for insuring airflow is sufficient from the operation of a venturi.**
- 6. While the welder is performing hot work in the ditch, all non-essential personnel shall be out of the hole until the task has been completed.**

7. **Ensure all employees are current in fire extinguisher training, and review procedures and responsibilities prior to start of work.**
8. **Ensure all valves used in the isolation process have been greased prior to start of work. Monitor valves for leaks and if leaks can not be stopped, insert pancakes into the system.**
9. **A written check off list should be used at the pre-job safety meeting to cover all aspects of the job and employee responsibilities. This will remind employees of the procedures that should be followed during the job.**

We have discussed the above recommendations with representatives from your company and have been advised that these recommendations will be implemented.

Under 49 United States Code, 60122 you are subject to a civil penalty not to exceed \$25,000 for each violation for each day the violations persists up to a maximum of \$500,000 for any related series of violations.

We have reviewed the circumstances and supporting documents involved in this investigation, and have decided not to assess a civil penalty regarding this incident. We advise you, however, that should you not correct the circumstances leading to the violations, we will take enforcement action when and if the continued violations comes to our attention.

You will not hear from us again with regard to the noted violations and our subsequent action. Because of the good faith that you have exhibited up to this time, we expect that you will act to bring your pipeline and operations into compliance with the pipeline safety regulations.

Sincerely,

**William H. Gute
Director, Eastern Region
Office of Pipeline Safety**

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