
**DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION**
**RESEARCH AND SPECIAL
PROGRAMS ADMINISTRATION**

[Docket No. P-95-2W; Notice 1]

**Transportation of Natural Gas by
Pipeline**
**Grant of Waiver; Columbia Gas
Transmission Corporation**

Columbia Gas Transmission Corporation has petitioned the Research and Special Programs Administration (RSPA) for temporary waiver of a pipeline safety standard that requires plastic pipe to be installed below ground level (49 CFR 192.321(a)). The petition applies to approximately 1000 feet of 2-inch plastic pipe, which is to replace Line 778 and Line 2060 in a rural area near the town of Kirby in Greene County, Pennsylvania.

According to the petition, coal mining threatens to cause ground subsidence beneath the two existing pipelines. To avoid possible line breakage and service outage, Columbia proposes to replace these pipelines with approximately 1000 feet of plastic pipeline installed temporarily above ground. After necessary state and local permits are obtained to authorize ditching for burial, Columbia plans to bury the plastic pipeline 3 feet below ground within 6 to 8 months after construction.

The petition explains that the above ground plastic pipeline would present little risk to the public because the area is rural, with no dwellings within half a mile of the pipeline. Also, line markers are to be spaced at 100-foot intervals, and gas warning tape and other suitable warnings would be installed along the pipeline route. In addition, Columbia stated it will patrol the pipeline monthly, or more frequently if necessary, to assure the integrity of the pipeline while it is above ground. Columbia further stated that it did not expect external loading or vandalism to be a problem on the pipeline, nor does it expect ultraviolet degradation during the period of exposure.

In a separate proceeding, "Regulatory Review; Gas Pipeline Safety Standards," RSPA has proposed to revise §192.321(a) to allow the installation of plastic pipe above ground under certain conditions

(Docket PS-124; 57 FR 39576; Aug. 31, 1992). The proposed conditions would limit aboveground use to 30 days in places where external damage is unlikely or adequate protection is provided. In addition, the plastic pipe would have to be resistant to ultraviolet light and temperature extremes, and not have been previously used above ground.

RSPA received written comments on the proposal from 14 gas pipeline companies, 3 pipeline-related associations, and a state pipeline safety agency. No one objected to the concept of temporary aboveground use. In fact, many commenters suggested that the proposal did not go far enough, asserting that permanent aboveground installations should be allowed when plastic pipe is encased in steel conduit. Others argued that a 30-day limit on temporary usage would be too brief in view of the time it may take to construct a permanent underground installation. Still other commenters argued the proposed time limit and prohibition against reinstalling aboveground plastic pipe above ground were unnecessary. They contended that commercially available plastic pipe can be exposed to ultraviolet light for at least 2 years without degradation of material properties. These commenters suggested RSPA allow the use of plastic pipe above ground according to pipe manufacturers' recommended exposure limits.

Because RSPA has already proposed to allow the limited use of plastic pipe above ground, we believe that waiving §192.321(a) as Columbia has proposed is appropriate. However, in view of the issue in Docket PS-124 concerning the safe period for temporary aboveground installations, we are granting the waiver on condition that the plastic pipe does not remain above ground longer than the manufacturer recommends for aboveground exposure. Given that Docket PS-124 has already afforded the public an opportunity to comment on above ground use of plastic pipe, we believe further notice and opportunity to comment on the matter within the context of this waiver proceeding would be unnecessary. Therefore, this waiver is granted as final without further public notice.

For the reasons explained above, RSPA, by this order, finds that the requested waiver of §192.321(a) is not inconsistent with pipeline safety. Therefore, effective

immediately, Columbia's petition for waiver is granted, provided the installation is carried out as proposed in the petition and does not exceed the manufacturer's recommended maximum period of exposure.

Authority: 49 U.S.C. §6018(c); and 49 CFR 1.53.

Issued in Washington, D.C. on

Richard B. Felder,
Associate Administrator for Pipeline Safety.