



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Pipeline and Hazardous
Materials Safety
Administration**

1200 New Jersey Ave., S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

JUL 29 2015

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

House Report 113-464, accompanying the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015, requested that the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) provide a report to Congress on the agency's fiscal year 2015 staffing and hiring plans as well as actual turnover and hiring in fiscal year 2014 for the Office of Pipeline Safety. This letter transmits PHMSA's FY 2015 Pipeline Safety Staffing and Hiring report under this requirement.

PHMSA has determined that the FY 2015 Appropriation provides sufficient funds to support filling an additional 109 full-time positions, and we thank Congress for providing these much needed positions. This additional inspector and enforcement (I&E) workforce will allow PHMSA to close the gap in inspections and enforcement with a total of 223 I&E full-time positions.

As of July 27, 2015, PHMSA has filled 47 percent of the new positions. Although we have been working diligently to fill these positions, we are not satisfied with the progress made to date. As a result, we have initiated a multi-phased strategy to speed the rate of hiring for these mission critical positions. This new strategy includes the use of innovative recruitment tools, incentives, and targeted hiring fairs. Additionally, we have reviewed qualifications and skills mix to ensure we are attracting a diverse candidate pool. Details of our new strategy are described in the attached.

Identical letters were sent to the Vice Chairman of the Senate Committee on Appropriations, and the Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Committee on Appropriations. If I can provide further information or assistance, please feel free to call me at 202-366-4461.

Sincerely,

Stacy Cummings

Enclosure



U.S. Department
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**Pipeline and Hazardous
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1200 New Jersey Ave., S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

JUL 29 2015

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski
Vice Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Vice Chairwoman Mikulski:

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The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

House Report 113-464, accompanying the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015, requested that the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) provide a report to Congress on the agency's fiscal year 2015 staffing and hiring plans as well as actual turnover and hiring in fiscal year 2014 for the Office of Pipeline Safety. This letter transmits PHMSA's FY 2015 Pipeline Safety Staffing and Hiring report under this requirement.

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1200 New Jersey Ave., S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

JUL 29 2015

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Lowey:

House Report 113-464, accompanying the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015, requested that the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) provide a report to Congress on the agency's fiscal year 2015 staffing and hiring plans as well as actual turnover and hiring in fiscal year 2014 for the Office of Pipeline Safety. This letter transmits PHMSA's FY 2015 Pipeline Safety Staffing and Hiring report under this requirement.

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**Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA)
Report to Congress on Pipeline Safety Staffing & Hiring for FY 2015**

PHMSA – Office of Pipeline Safety
FY 2015 Staffing – Schedule of Hiring Actions for 109 New Positions
October 1, 2014 to July 27, 2015

Location	New Total	New On-Board	New Accepted Offer	New Remaining (Vacancies)	% Filled
I&E Headquarters (HQ)	15	4	5	6	60%
I&E Field Offices	78	23	8	47	40%
Non-I&E Staff	16	6	5	5	69%
TOTALS	109	33	18	58	47%

***Inspection & Enforcement (I&E) staff includes field inspectors and their supervisors, attorneys, and other staff that directly assist PHMSA in its inspection and enforcement activities.**

Summary: PHMSA appreciates the 109 new positions provided by Congress as these positions represent the largest hiring surge in PHMSA’s history, and constitute a 25% increase in our workforce. As of July 27, 2015, there have been 33 new employees on-boarded and 18 prospective employees have accepted positions with PHMSA. PHMSA opened and advertised positions starting late December, 2014 after the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015 provided funding needed to afford positions requested under the Pipeline Safety Reform initiative.

FY 2014 Turnover and Hiring:

In FY 2014, the Office of Pipeline Safety planned to have a workforce of 221 full-time positions. The turnover, driven by attrition, during FY 2014 was 7.0%. During FY 2014 PHMSA hired 19 personnel and at the end of the fiscal year there were 17 vacancies and 92% (205 of 221) of positions in the Office of Pipeline Safety were onboard.

PHMSA – Office of Pipeline Safety
FY 2014 Schedule of Staffing Count Change
October 1, 2013 to September 30, 2014

Location	Start of the Year Onboard	Start of the Year Vacancies	Hires	Attrition	End of Year Onboard
I&E Headquarters (HQ)	28	2	6	2	32
I&E Field Offices	108	9	5	9	104
Non-I&E Staff	64	10	8	3	69
TOTALS	200	21	19	14	205

PHMSA FY 2015 Hiring Plan

PHMSA has set a realistic target of 100% of new positions on board by March 31, 2016.

PHMSA has consistently met Departmental standards for filling positions within a 90-day timeframe by using USAjobs vacancy announcements and the Veteran's Recruitment Appointment (VRA) process to fill positions.

Historically, PHMSA has had trouble hiring experienced engineers for inspection and enforcement positions, largely because of competition with the private energy sector, which offers higher salaries. PHMSA has re-evaluated the qualifications required and is planning to move forward with updating the make-up for its three person inspector teams to improve its ability to fill vacancies, while maintaining its high safety standards.

Currently, most inspections are conducted by three person inspector teams made up entirely of engineers. To reduce the number of engineers needed, PHMSA is moving some of the team functions to auditor and transportation specialist roles, instead of licensed engineers. This will reduce the number of general engineers being recruited, which will make it easier to fill positions. This will also yield cost savings, as some of the newly hired employees would enter government service at lower hiring grades and salary. PHMSA is currently recruiting qualified inspectors, auditors, and legal support staff through multiple announcements in different areas of the country.

To deal with this surge, PHMSA is deploying a phased, cumulative strategy, which began in December 2014, as detailed below.

Short Term Strategies (0 - 60 days):	
Action	
	Form a Steering Group with the Office of Pipeline Safety to plan and execute the hiring surge. Meet weekly to review progress
	Authorize multiple selections off existing field certificates of eligible candidates
	Advertise all existing vacancies in social media (Twitter, etc.)
	Prioritize positions for timing of hiring
	Hire 3 Contract HR Specialists; 1 for Staffing and Classification, 1 for Processing, and 1 for Outreach and Recruitment
	Deploy the following hiring tools as needed:
	- Open continuous announcements for each region (with option for Veterans Recruitment Appointment announcement)
	- Use Subject Matter Experts for each announcement
	- Advertise each job in industry journals to help get the word out that PHMSA is hiring
	- Consider Pathways Interns/Presidential Management Fellows
	- Use superior qualifications/advance in leave to compete for superior candidates
	*All actions completed
Mid-Term Strategies (60 - 120 days):	
Action	
	Hire 2 Federal HR positions, to ensure effective workforce and human capital planning and recruitment strategies
	Additional training for hiring managers

Plan and execute major advertising campaign to get the word out that PHMSA is hiring
Contract to do active outreach to passive job seekers
Develop new Pipeline Auditor position description and Hiring Package
Investigate Medical Requirements
Report due to Congress within 120 days of appropriation enactment regarding hiring plan.
*Actions are 80% complete
Long Term Strategies (120 - 180 days):
Action
Review results of first 120 days and adjust
Continue hiring strategies

In addition, PHMSA is considering the following hiring strategies to accelerate the pace of hiring.

- **Hiring Re-employed Annuitants** – Develop and send letters to retired pipeline inspectors to determine if any are interested in returning to work during the hiring with a waiver of annuity offset.
- **Offering Special Pay Rate** – Continue exploration of establishing a special pay rate for pipeline inspectors.
- **Balancing Education and Experience Requirements at lower graded positions** - Drop requirement for previous pipeline experience at lower hiring grade levels.
- **Offering Relocation and Recruitment incentives** – Review practice of only offering relocation at higher grades.
- **Offering a Professional Development Program** – Model the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) program for attracting students and recent graduates.
- **Featuring Positions in USAJOBS** – Post PHMSA pipeline jobs in the Featured Job on USAJOBS.
- **Offering Student Loan Repayment** – Review student loan repayment practices.
- **Considering Targeted Radio/TV Ads** – Consider radio/TV Ads as part of recruitment.
- **Offering Employee Referral Program incentives** - provide an incentive to a current employees within PHMSA, who refer applicants who are subsequently selected and employed in a program designated position.
- **Offering Recruitment, Retention and Relocation Bonuses**