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Contact: Patricia Klinger
Damon A. Hill
Tel: (202) 366-4831

DOT Proposes Fine for Enterprise Products Following Investigation into Kansas Pipeline Failure

The U.S. Department of Transportation today proposed to fine Enterprise Products Operating, LLC for alleged violations of federal pipeline safety regulations. The proposed \$466,200 fine follows the Department's investigation into the pipeline company's September 2007 failure near Englewood, KS.

"Today's action reinforces a message the Department has communicated for years to owners and operators of pipeline systems and other freight and commodity transporters - - Safety First," said Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood.

The proposed fine and finding of probable violation are a result of an accident investigation recently completed by the Department's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA). During the investigation, PHMSA investigators discovered possible failures by Enterprise to ensure pipeline workers were adequately trained to perform necessary system repairs as required by federal operator qualification regulations. Proper implementation of operator qualification programs by pipeline companies is vital to preventing system failures, injury to people, property damage, and other serious consequences. Other probable violations include failures to conduct required drug testing of maintenance personnel following the accident.

"America expects pipeline operators to use highly skilled and qualified people to construct, maintain, and operate its energy pipeline networks," Secretary LaHood added. "The goal is not to punish operators, but to hold them accountable for protecting the health, welfare and safety of American communities."

On Sept. 11, 2007, PHMSA inspectors responded to an Enterprise Products pipeline rupture and release of approximately 14,700 barrels of natural gas liquid (a highly volatile product). Post-accident failure analysis determined the failure was due to the improper installation of pipeline system components following recently conducted maintenance activities. Although the release did not result in any deaths or injuries to the public, the event closed State Highway 283 for five days, seriously affecting daily commuters as crews worked to secure and clean-up spilled product.

Enterprise Products operates approximately 35,000 miles of pipelines in 19 states. PHMSA inspectors and their state pipeline safety partners are committed to ensuring the safety of America's pipeline transportation system and will continue to carefully monitor Enterprise Products' activities.

Operators may request an administrative hearing to contest proposed violations identified by PHMSA investigators before any findings and fines from an investigation are deemed final.

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