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## **News**

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### **New Safety Orders Issued to BP Exploration for North Slope Pipelines**

The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) today issued new orders to BP Exploration (Alaska) Inc. requiring additional rigorous inspections of the company's entire North Slope pipeline network, and outlining the safety criteria BP must meet before it can restart its downed line there.

Today's orders require BP to conduct four daily surveys of all its low-pressure lines in the North Slope, including the Eastern operating line, where the company this week halted operations due to a leak and extensive pipeline corrosion, PHMSA Administrator Admiral Thomas Barrett said. The company will be required to use special heat-seeking infrared equipment to spot leaks and conduct visual walking, driving or flying surveys up and down the entire 22-mile length of the system, he added.

"Our first priority is the continued safe operation and reliability of all BP lines located on the North Slope," said Admiral Barrett. "These new orders will help ensure BP's current operations remain safe as we work to restore full service along these lines as quickly and safely as possible."

The order also directs BP to strip the insulation from its Western operating line, which may continue to move oil, and conduct an ultrasonic test, using technology similar to a sonogram, to obtain a complete picture of the line's conditions, he said.

Prior to considering any return to service of the Eastern line, the order requires BP to conduct a series of diagnostic tests to ensure the line has been fully inspected and that any defects are repaired to strict federal standards. In addition, the order requires BP to provide PHMSA within 30 days its plans to replace or restore the Eastern line.

Today's order is the third directive this year from the nation's pipeline safety office requiring stepped up inspections of BP's Prudhoe Bay pipelines. The original order was a result of a pipeline failure along the Western line on March 2, 2006. It was amended on July 20, 2006 with additional requirements.

PHMSA inspectors have been on site since the March spill to review pipeline operations, meet with federal and state officials, and ensure completion of the corrective actions required by the agency's orders, Barrett said. PHMSA will continue to coordinate its actions with the federal-state Joint Pipeline Office and with numerous federal and state agencies that oversee the safety on the North Slope of Alaska.

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