



M O V I N G T H E
AMERICAN
ECONOMY

U.S. Department of Transportation
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.
www.dot.gov/affairs/briefing.htm

News

PHMSA 03-06
Monday, June 12, 2006

Contact: James Wiggins (202) 366-4978
Damon Hill (202) 366-4424
Office Tel.: (202) 366-4831

Federal Safety Agency Reaffirms Order Addressing Safety of Alaskan Oil Pipelines

BP (Exploration) Alaska, Inc. won't be able to postpone testing requirements ordered by the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), but has been given the green light to use alternate testing methods to check the condition of its North Slope pipeline operations, the agency reported today.

The requirements stem from a safety order issued by PHMSA in response to a BP pipeline spill March 2 on Alaska's North Slope. BP was ordered to test the condition of its low-pressure oil pipelines, quickly correct any problems and report on progress.

The pipeline agency has pursued aggressive oversight, reviewing testing data from over 2,200 locations along the 22 miles of pipeline in question and deploying inspectors to the field multiple times. PHMSA has preliminarily determined that the testing alternatives sought by BP will meet the agency's intent because of the company's extensive testing, coupled with enhanced monitoring.

But PHMSA rejected BP's request to postpone other requirements in the order, which will remain in place until the line is thoroughly inspected. The agency will continue to require BP to conduct extensive internal testing, take protective actions and may impose additional requirements following a comprehensive review of the company's data, both by PHMSA inspectors and independent engineering experts.

"Our objective is to ensure their pipelines are completely safe," said PHMSA Administrator Tom Barrett. "We will hold pipeline operators accountable to their fundamental obligation to protect public safety and the environment where they operate."

The agency is also expediting efforts to bring all low-pressure transmission pipelines across the nation posing environmental risks under more stringent federal safety regulation and is working in coordination with other federal and state agencies.

-END-