

historical interpretation (ADB-02-06; 67 FR 64447; Oct. 18, 2002).⁴

Hazardous Liquid Gathering Line Definition. RSPA's hazardous liquid pipeline safety regulations in 49 CFR part 195 apply to the transportation by pipeline of hazardous liquid (petroleum, petroleum products, and anhydrous ammonia) and carbon dioxide (in a supercritical state), except gathering lines in rural areas and certain other pipelines (§ 195.1). The term "gathering line" is defined in § 195.2 as "a pipeline 219.1 mm (8½ in) or less nominal outside diameter that transports petroleum from a production facility."

⁴ ADB-02-6:

To: Owners and Operators of Natural Gas Pipeline Facilities.

Subject: Standards for classifying natural gas gathering lines.

Purpose: To inform operators of the standards OPS currently uses to classify natural gas gathering lines.

Advisory: Standards for classification of natural gas gathering lines.

Until OPS completes its rulemaking to better define natural gas gathering lines (Docket No. RSPA-98-4868), OPS will continue to classify lines according to the four-point standard established through court precedent and historical interpretation. OPS will also continue to classify lines that pose unique difficulties of classification on a case-by-case basis. In brief, in the most common situation, gathering begins at or near the well head. In most cases, the gathering process terminates at the outlet of a processing plant. A processing plant is defined by the extraction of heavy ends from the natural gas. If there is no upstream processing plant, the gathering process terminates at the outlet of a pipeline compressor. For the purposes of determining the termination point of the gas gathering process, OPS does not consider a well head compressor (field compressor) to be a pipeline compressor. If there is no processing plant or pipeline compressor, the point at which the gathering process ends is where two or more well pipelines converge. If none of these points applies, the gas gathering termination point is where there is a change in ownership of the pipeline. These points are determined on a case-by-case basis considering the location of the pipeline in relation to population density, major traffic areas, and environmentally sensitive areas. To summarize, OPS considers the termination of gas gathering to be:

- (1) The outlet of a processing plant that extracts heavy ends from the natural gas;
- (2) The outlet of a pipeline compressor (not including a well head compressor);
- (3) The point where two or more well pipelines converge; or
- (4) The point where there is a change in ownership of the pipeline.

Section 195.2 also defines "production facility" and "rural area" without reference to the gathering line definition. RSPA has had little difficulty applying these definitions to identify gathering lines subject to Part 195 or those excluded from Part 195 because of location in rural areas.

Purpose of Meetings and Request for Comment

RSPA, working with NAPSRS, is continuing to assess the acceptability of the present definitions of gas and hazardous liquid gathering lines and related definitions for purposes of determining the beginning and end of gathering. We are particularly concerned about the impreciseness of the gas definition. We are inviting new public input to this process, which we hope will be informed by the history of previously proposed definitions and their shortcomings.

We also are considering the need to establish safety regulations for onshore gas and hazardous liquid gathering lines in rural areas. While Congress initially exempted these lines from Federal regulation, it has granted RSPA authority to regulate rural gathering lines whose physical characteristics pose a special risk to the public. We are interested in receiving ideas on what situations would make it appropriate to regulate the safety of rural gathering lines, and what those regulations should be. Potential commenters should keep in mind that the pipeline industry's consensus standards in ASME B31.4 and ASME B31.8 apply to rural gathering lines.

As stated in more detail above, we invite interested persons to attend the public meetings and present oral or written statements about any of the topics discussed in this notice. Written statements not presented at the meeting may be submitted to the docket. If necessary, we may limit the time for oral presentations so that everyone who requests an opportunity to speak may do so. Those who do not request time for presentations may have an opportunity to speak as time allows.

We are especially interested in receiving comments on the following:

1. The point where gas production ends and gas gathering begins.
 2. The point where gas gathering ends and gas transmission or distribution begins.
 3. In defining "regulated gathering line," whether we should consider factors besides those that Congress specified (see footnote 2). For example, should we consider population density (by census or house count), or for hazardous liquid lines, potential for environmental damage.
 4. Whether Part 195 should apply to rural gathering lines that operate at more than 20 percent of specified minimum yield strength, or that could adversely affect an "unusually sensitive area" as defined in § 195.6. (Note that certain crude oil gathering lines are, by law, exempt from safety regulation (see footnote 2)).
 5. If you recommend safety regulations for rural gas or hazardous liquid gathering lines, to which rural lines would the regulations apply and why, approximately how many miles would be covered by the regulations, and what would be the estimated cost per mile of complying with the regulations.
 6. The approximate mileage of rural gathering lines not now covered by Part 195.
 7. Whether safety regulations for gas or hazardous liquid rural gathering lines operating at low stress (e.g., 20 percent or less of specified minimum yield strength) or a specified pressure for plastic lines should be fewer and possibly less stringent than regulations for other rural gathering lines.
- There will be an open session for questions and answers before the close of the meeting. Additional meetings are being planned, and dates and places will be announced in future notices.

Authority: 49 U.S.C. Chapter 601 and 49 CFR 1.53.

Issued in Washington, DC, on October 30, 2003.

Stacey L. Gerard,

Associate Administrator for Pipeline Safety.

[FR Doc. 03-27858 Filed 11-4-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-60-P