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Authority: 49 U.S.C. 30111, 30168; delegation of authority at 49 CFR 1.50 and 501.8.

Noble N. Bowie,

Associate Administrator for Planning, Evaluation and Budget.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Research and Special Programs Administration

Pipeline Safety: Self-Assessment of Pipeline Operator Public Education Programs

AGENCY: Research and Special Programs Administration (RSPA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice; issuance of advisory bulletin.

SUMMARY: RSPA's Office of Pipeline Safety (RSPA/OPS) is issuing this advisory bulletin to owners and operators of hazardous liquid pipelines, gas transmission pipelines, gas distribution pipeline systems and gathering pipeline systems regulated under the Federal pipeline safety regulations at 49 CFR Parts 192 and 195. In an advisory bulletin issued September 5, 2003 (68 FR 52816) RSPA/OPS noted that the Pipeline Safety Improvement Act of 2002 (PSIA) requires each owner or operator of a gas or hazardous liquid pipeline system to implement a continuous public education program on the use of one-call notification systems and other damage prevention activities, the indications of and hazards of an unintended release of product from a pipeline, the public safety steps required after a release, and how to report pipeline product releases. This advisory reminds pipeline operators that they must complete and submit self-assessments of their public education programs to RSPA/OPS for receipt no later than December 17, 2003, to meet the deadline established in the PSIA.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Juan Carlos Martinez, (202) 366-1933; or by e-mail, juan.martinez@rspa.dot.gov. This document can be viewed at the OPS home page at <http://ops.dot.gov>.

I. Advisory Bulletin (ADB-03-08)

To: Owners and Operators of Hazardous Liquid, Gas Transmission, Gas Distribution, and Gathering Pipeline Systems.

Subject: Self-Assessment of Pipeline Operator Public Education Programs.

Purpose: To remind owners and operators of gas and hazardous liquid pipeline systems of the requirements for effective public education programs and of the requirement to complete and submit self-assessments of those programs to RSPA/OPS no later than December 17, 2003.

Advisory: The Pipeline Safety Improvement Act of 2002 (PSIA) requires that each owner or operator of a gas or hazardous liquid pipeline system must implement a continuous public education program. The PSIA requires that by December 17, 2003, each owner or operator must review its existing public education program for effectiveness and modify the program as necessary by that date.

Although submission of the public education program is not required at this time, RSPA/OPS advises each operator to document their compliance with the PSIA by completing a formal self-assessment of its public education program and by comparing this program against the guidelines established in the recently-issued, industry consensus standard, API RP 1162, *Public Awareness Programs for Pipeline Operators*, and has developed a self-assessment form for that purpose. The self-assessment forms can be completed and submitted online at <http://primis.rspa.dot.gov/edu/rp1162.htm>. Self-assessment forms may also be downloaded from the same Web address and submitted to RSPA/OPS via E-mail, fax, or other delivery method.

Operators must submit their self-assessments to RSPA/OPS for receipt no later than December 17, 2003:

- Completed electronic forms may be submitted to RSPA/OPS as E-mail attachments at:
RP1162SA@rspa.dot.gov.

- Hard-copy forms can be completed and sent to RSPA/OPS via fax, U.S. mail, or other delivery methods, but must be received by RSPA/OPS no later than December 17, 2003. Delivery of documents should be confirmed. Forms submitted by mail or other delivery methods should be sent to: Attn: Juan Carlos Martinez, Room 7128, U.S. Department of Transportation, Research and Special Programs Administration, Office of Pipeline Safety, 400 7th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590.

Faxes should be sent to: Juan Carlos Martinez, fax # 202-366-4566.

(Operators may call 202-366-1933 for confirmation of fax receipt).

Operators are encouraged to also provide copies of their self-assessments to the appropriate state pipeline safety agencies.

II. Background

The Federal pipeline safety regulations at 49 CFR 192 and 49 CFR 195 require operators of gas and hazardous liquid pipelines to establish continuing education programs to enable customers, the public, appropriate government organizations, and persons engaged in excavation activities to recognize a pipeline emergency for the purpose of reporting to the operator or the appropriate public officials. The regulations also require operators to establish and maintain liaison with appropriate fire, police, and other public officials and to develop and implement written programs to prevent pipeline damage from excavation activities.

The PSIA requires that each owner or operator of a gas or hazardous liquid pipeline system implement a continuous public education program on the use of one-call notification systems prior to excavation and other damage prevention activities, possible hazards associated with unintended releases from the pipeline system, physical indications that such a release may have occurred, what steps should be taken for public safety in the event of a pipeline release, and how to report such an event.

The PSIA requires that by December 17, 2003, each owner or operator of a gas or hazardous liquid pipeline system must review its existing public education program for effectiveness and modify the program as necessary. The completed program must include activities to advise affected municipalities, school districts, businesses, and residents of pipeline system locations. The completed program must be submitted upon request to the Secretary of Transportation or, in the case of an intrastate pipeline system operator, to the appropriate State agency, and shall be periodically reviewed by the Secretary or, in the case of an intrastate pipeline system operator, the appropriate State agency.

The PSIA also provides that the Secretary of Transportation may develop material for use in the program and issue standards prescribing the elements of an effective public education program.

In recognition of the importance of effective public education programs and outstanding recommendations from the