

National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), and anticipated legislative action in this regard, a pipeline industry Task Force has developed a consensus standard establishing guidelines for pipeline operators on development, implementation, and evaluation of public awareness programs for operating pipeline systems, API Recommended Practice (RP) 1162, *Public Awareness Programs for Pipeline Operators*. The Task Force included representatives from gas and hazardous liquid pipeline companies, local gas distribution companies, gathering pipeline system operators, and pipeline industry trade associations. Additional comments were solicited from local public officials, the public, and other interested parties. Representatives from RSPA/OPS and the National Association of Pipeline Safety Representatives (NAPSR) observed and provided comments on the development of the standard.

API RP 1162 was balloted and approved following the guidelines of both the American Petroleum Institute (API) and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). After revisions to reflect comments, it was published as a national consensus standard in September 2003.

RSPA/OPS considers that "public education programs," as used in the PSIA, and "public awareness programs," as used in API RP 1162, are the same concept. The level of public education and awareness regarding pipeline operations and safety can be improved only through education and communication programs that are demonstrated to be effective. Therefore, RSPA/OPS plans to initiate a new rulemaking, setting minimum requirements for pipeline operators to develop, implement, and manage public education programs. RSPA/OPS will incorporate by reference into the new rule, all or portions of the guidance provided in API RP 1162.

RSPA/OPS has evaluated the PSIA requirements that operators review and modify their public education programs and submit their completed programs upon request to RSPA/OPS or the appropriate state pipeline safety agency. We have determined that the intent of the requirements can be met and pipeline safety can be best served in the short-term by having pipeline operators document their compliance with the PSIA by completing a formal self-assessment of their public education programs and evaluating these programs against the guidelines provided in API RP 1162. Therefore, RSPA/OPS has developed a self-assessment form that will help operators identify gaps in their public education programs and

improvements needed to align those programs with the requirements of API RP 1162.

Operators must complete and submit self-assessments of their public education programs to RSPA/OPS no later than December 17, 2003, to meet the deadline established in the PSIA. Operators are encouraged to complete and submit the self-assessment online. Operators are encouraged to also provide copies of their self-assessments to the appropriate state pipeline safety agencies. The self-assessment forms can be found online at <http://primis.rspa.dot.gov/edu/rp1162.htm>.

Alternatively, a Microsoft Word form for electronic completion of the self-assessment form may be downloaded and completed offline. Or, a file for hard-copy printing and completion of the self-assessment may be downloaded and completed offline. Self-assessment forms downloaded and completed offline must be submitted to RSPA/OPS for receipt no later than December 17, 2003.

Operators will be required in the future to submit their public education program plans to the RSPA/OPS for review. Time frames for submission will be determined by the RSPA/OPS and operators will be notified. These plans should identify how the operators will address gaps and make improvements in their public education programs. Operator public education programs will be subject to inspection by RSPA/OPS and the appropriate state pipeline safety agency.

Issued in Washington, DC on November 19, 2003.

James K. O'Steen,

Deputy Associate Administrator for Pipeline Safety.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Research and Special Programs Administration

[Docket No. RSPA-03-15733; Notice 1]

Pipeline Safety: Request for Waiver; Portland Natural Gas Transmission System

AGENCY: Research and Special Programs Administration (RSPA); U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Notice of intent to consider waiver request.

SUMMARY: PNGTS Operating Co., LLC, operator of the Portland Natural Gas Transmission System (PNGTS), requested a waiver of compliance with

the regulatory requirements at 49 CFR 192.611 to confirm or revise the maximum allowable operating pressure of its natural gas pipeline after Class location changes occurred in areas associated with two sections of the pipeline totaling 595 feet in length in West Stewartstown, New Hampshire.

DATES: Persons interested in submitting written comments on the waiver request described in this notice must do so by December 26, 2003. Late filed comments will be considered so far as practicable.

ADDRESSES: You may submit written comments by mailing or delivering an original and two copies to the Dockets Facility, U.S. Department of Transportation, Room PL-401, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590-0001. The Dockets Facility is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on Federal holidays when the facility is closed. Alternatively, you may submit written comments to the docket electronically at the following web address: <http://dms.dot.gov>.

All written comments should identify the docket and notice numbers stated in the heading of this notice. Anyone who wants confirmation of mailed comments must include a self-addressed stamped postcard. To file written comments electronically, after logging on to <http://dms.dot.gov>, click on "Comment/Submissions." You can also read comments and other material in the docket. General information about the Federal pipeline safety program is available at <http://ops.dot.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

James Reynolds by phone at 202-366-2786, by fax at 202-366-4566, by mail at DOT/RSPA, Office of Pipeline Safety, 400 7th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590, or by e-mail at james.reynolds@rspa.dot.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

On March 19, 2003, PNGTS Operating Co., LLC, operator of the Portland Natural Gas Transmission System, submitted a request seeking a waiver of compliance with the regulatory requirements at 49 CFR 192.611 to confirm or revise the maximum allowable operating pressure of its natural gas pipeline after Class location changes occurred in areas associated with two sections of the pipeline totaling 595 feet in length in West Stewartstown, New Hampshire (the "waiver segments"). In lieu of complying with the § 192.611 requirements, PNGTS proposes to conduct certain alternative risk control activities on the pipeline that exceed the