

applications of Mexican carriers for operating authority beyond the border commercial zones. Unless the Ninth Circuit Court decision is reversed or the relevant terms of the DOT Appropriations Acts are not extended, FMCSA cannot process applications of Mexico-domiciled motor carriers seeking authority to operate beyond the border commercial zones until a PEIS and General Conformity Evaluation have been completed and considered by FMCSA. Implementing the Certification rule will not affect that prohibition.

Further, the Certification rule standing alone will have no impact on prospective Mexican truck and bus operations beyond the border commercial zones. For example, it will not affect either the number of Mexico-domiciled vehicles entering the United States or the number and duration of safety inspections of these vehicles. Indeed, unlike the application and safety monitoring rules, which apply solely to Mexico-domiciled motor carriers, the only connection between the Certification rule and the operation of Mexican carriers beyond the border commercial zones is the contingency Congress created when it made issuance of the rule one of the preconditions to the processing of these carriers' applications for operating authority.

As noted above, FMCSA received no public comments in response to the EA. Following the close of the public comment period, the agency prepared a Finding of No Significant Impact document for the Certification rule. FMCSA's full Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact are available in the docket.

In accordance with the agency's statutory obligation under 49 U.S.C. 31148(b), FMCSA and its State partners will comply with the statutory certification requirement effective January 1, 2004.

Issued on: December 18, 2003.

Annette M. Sandberg,
Administrator.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Research and Special Programs Administration

Pipeline Safety: Potential Service Disruptions in Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition Systems

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 notice to owners and operators of gas and hazardous liquid pipelines who use Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems. Pipeline owners and operators should establish thorough testing regimes when they design and implement modifications and enhancements of their SCADA systems. Owners and operators should consider using off-line or developmental workstations to test changes, then deploy the changes on-line under close monitoring at times when few operational changes are expected on the pipeline. Applying these techniques will help ensure that changes in the SCADA system environment do not have an unexpected effect on pipeline operations.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

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I. Advisory Bulletin (ADB-03-09)

To: Owners and Operators of Gas and Hazardous Liquid Pipeline Systems Who Use SCADA Systems.

Subject: Potential Service Disruptions in SCADA Systems.

Purpose: To inform pipeline owners and operators of the potential for service disruptions in SCADA systems caused by maintenance or enhancements of SCADA system configuration and other critical databases, and the possibility of those disruptions leading to or aggravating pipeline releases.

Advisory: Each pipeline owner or operator should review their procedures for the upgrading, configuring, maintaining, and enhancing its SCADA system. If not well thought out and thoroughly tested, such changes could cause inadvertent service disruptions in the SCADA system. Resulting conditions could may impede controllers responsible for operating the pipeline from promptly recognizing and reacting to abnormal conditions, and could potentially impact the controllers' abilities to restore normal operations. Owners and operators should ensure that SCADA system modifications do not degrade overall SCADA performance to an unacceptable level. To further reduce the potential effect of service disruptions, responsible personnel should coordinate significant

and non-routine SCADA modifications to occur at times when no significant changes to pipeline operations are anticipated.

It is good practice for owners and operators of pipeline systems to periodically review their SCADA system configurations, operating procedures, and performance measurements to ensure that the SCADA computer servers are functioning as intended. Owners and operators should consider using off-line or development workstations/servers to help ensure that impending changes are tested as thoroughly as possible before moving the changes into production. Although off-line or development workstations can be valuable, they may not fully represent timing, load and other factors that will be present in the production environment. System modifications should be implemented via structured and managed processes to reduce the likelihood of unforeseen problems. Such controlled processes are especially important if an owner or operator makes changes directly in the on-line environment.

In addition, owners or operators should periodically confirm that associated design and maintenance personnel, whether employees, contractors, or third-party providers, are adequately skilled to perform SCADA system modifications without causing undesirable consequences. These same personnel should be cognizant of the critical system attributes that should be monitored during the testing phase of implementation.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

II. Background

This advisory bulletin responds to National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Recommendation P-02-05, which suggested that RSPA/OPS: "[i]ssue an advisory bulletin to all pipeline owners and operators who use supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) systems advising them to implement an off-line workstation that can be used to modify their SCADA system database or to perform developmental and testing work independent of their on-line systems. Advise owners and operators to use the off-line system before any modifications are implemented to ensure that those modifications are error-free and that they create no ancillary problems for controllers responsible for operating the pipeline."

During an earlier investigation of a pipeline incident, RSPA/OPS inspectors identified inadequate SCADA performance as an operational safety