

Pipeline safety reauthorization

McAfee & Taft RegLINC - September 2011

By **Chris Paul**

A bill (S. 275) to reauthorize pipeline safety programs cleared the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee on May 5, 2011. The bill would:

- Include stiffer penalties for violators
- Include fines for obstructing pipeline investigations
- Include fees for reviewing pipeline designs
- Eliminate exemptions and require all local and state government agencies and their contractors to notify "One-Call" notification centers before digging
- Require installation of automatic or remote-controlled shutoff valves on new transmission pipelines
- Require time limits for accident and leak notification by pipeline operators to local and state government officials and emergency responders
- Require the Secretary of Transportation to evaluate whether integrity management system requirements should be expanded beyond currently defined high-consequence areas
- Provide summary of pipeline emergency response, inspections, and standards available to the public on PHMSA's website
- Allow PHMSA to recover costs for oversight of major pipeline design and construction projects

Unlike the original version of the bill, the manager's substitute would allow PHMSA to maintain a status indication of each pipeline company's emergency response plan, a description of the plan's requirements, and a detailed summary of each plan, excluding information about the location and



amount of worst-case discharge scenarios as well as proprietary information. The original bill would have required posting of the complete emergency plan, which drew objections from representatives of the pipeline industry who said security would be compromised.

In response to the pipeline explosion in San Bruno, California, the bill will also require all intrastate and interstate pipeline operators to verify records for all gas transmission lines in Class 3 and 4 areas, and Class 1 and 2 areas in high-consequence areas to establish maximum allowable operating pressures. Why this is necessary is unclear, as PHMSA issued an advisory in January requiring all pipeline operators to do detailed analyses to verify that all information about pipelines and pipeline structures was accurate and up-to-date.

LINKS

- [Chris Paul's Bio](#)
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Oklahoma City Tenth Floor • Two Leadership Square 211 N. Robinson • Oklahoma City, OK 73102-7103
(405) 235-9621 office • (405) 235-0439 fax

Tulsa 1717 S. Boulder Suite 900 • Tulsa, OK 74119 (918) 587-0000 office • (918) 599-9317 fax