



Credible.
Independent.
In the public interest.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For More Information Contact:

Kenneth Clarkson
Communications & Outreach Director
kenneth@pstrust.org
360-543-5686 x104

Interstate Natural Gas Association of America and API Take Issue with Important New Pipeline Safety Rule

The two groups have petitioned for changes and delayed implementation of a new rule created in response to 2010 PG&E Tragedy in San Bruno, CA

BELLINGHAM, Washington [Sept. 29, 2022] – The Interstate Natural Gas Association of America (INGAA) has joined the American Petroleum Institute (API) in petitioning for reconsideration the Department of Transportation’s Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration’s (PHMSA) final rule Pipeline Safety: Safety of Gas Transmission Pipelines: Repair Criteria, Integrity Management Improvements, Cathodic Protection, Management of Change, and Other Related Amendments published August 24, 2022 in the Federal Register.

The investigation following PG&E’s 2010 fatal pipeline explosion and fire exposed many weaknesses in federal pipeline integrity management rules. San Bruno exposed the fact that existing IM regulations allowed operators to make operational and maintenance decisions about their pipelines with missing, flawed, or erroneous information, or to make erroneous assumptions about physical pipeline properties. The investigation led to many National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) recommendations and congressional directives to PHMSA to make changes to improve safety.

These rules, incorporating some of the NTSB recommendations, have been a long time coming. Formal consideration of these changes started with publication of an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking in 2011. PHMSA’s new rule will increase pipeline safety by making clear regulatory expectations that operators must know about the pipes they operate, actively identify threats to those pipes, collect the necessary data to make decisions about how to mitigate those threats, and then mitigate them in a timely manner.

“These are fundamental tenets of an effective integrity management program.” Pipeline Safety Trust Executive Director Bill Caram said. “Many, if not most, of these new rules codify practices that we believe a prudent operator should have incorporated into its integrity management program over the last 20 years,” he said.

The new rule codifies requirements that will require all operators to incorporate common sense practices into their operations:

- Threat identification through a comprehensive risk assessment
- Collection of information about those threats, like the risk of corrosive constituents in gasses being transported, and incorporation of that data into a risk mitigation program that tries to reduce the high number of corrosion-related preventable failures
- Using more conservative assumptions and repair criteria to avoid failures in situations where current technology does not sufficiently and consistently recognize threats, like cracks and crack-like defects

INGAA and API’s petition argues that the current regulations allow them an increased amount of flexibility to make decisions about their individual pipeline systems and is worried this flexibility will be stripped away if PHMSA incorporates their new rule. In addition, industry states they need more time to figure out how they can comply with the new rule.

“The flexibility industry seeks is what enabled operators to make poor decisions based on wrong or missing information, resulting in tragic consequences from avoidable failures,” Caram said.

Industry’s continued challenges to these long-delayed rules and their implementation delays improved pipeline safety and keeps PHMSA’s limited staff from continuing their important work on other long-delayed safety efforts by tying them up with challenges to every new rule.

###