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For More Information Contact:

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

Pipeline Safety Trust Thanks Lawmakers Instrumental to PHMSA's Leak Detection and Repair Rulemaking

A group of lawmakers from both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives were critically-important allies and partners in making the legislation possible. Pipeline Safety Trust wishes to recognize the efforts of Senator Cantwell (D-WA), Representative Pallone (D-NJ), Representative Larsen (D-WA), Senator Markey (D-Mass.), Former Senator Udall (D-NM), and Former Representative DeFazio (D-OR) for all they have done to improve pipeline safety.

BELLINGHAM, Washington [Sept. 5, 2023] –The rule, “Gas Pipeline Leak Detection and Repair,” is an important step forward for pipeline safety as it seeks to prevent leaks from natural gas pipelines by requiring operators to monitor and repair their systems and prevent emissions. If finalized, this rule would result in substantial safety, health, and climate benefits for the public. Most recently, on Wednesday Aug. 16, the rule’s comment period ended. Pipeline Safety Trust (PST) hopes that the rule is finalized as soon as possible as it is currently written.

The rule was created at the request of Congress when it told the federal pipeline regulator, U.S. Department of Transportation’s Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) to write rules that would require gas pipeline operators to use Advanced Leak Detection technology to find and repair all hazardous methane leaks and minimize their overall methane emissions. Until now, operators have been allowed to let certain leaks flow unabated and vent methane into the atmosphere out of convenience. The current regulations, largely written before we knew the potency of methane as a greenhouse gas, are dated and in need of modernization. With the new rule, PHMSA has updated the regulations to reflect best practices on preventing leaks and minimizing harmful emissions given what we now know about methane.

The rule is also consistent with the Pipeline Safety Act, which allows PHMSA to regulate pipelines to keep communities and the environment safe. From PST’s perspective, pipeline

safety means keeping the product in the pipe, and the rule's requirements will advance this purpose.

Keeping product in the pipe not only saves lives, but protects our environment. Beyond explosions and fires, which have killed or maimed hundreds of people, emissions have been extremely detrimental to public health and climate. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas with over 80 times the global warming power of carbon dioxide in its first 20 years. This rule will prevent future methane emissions and in turn address some of the most immediate effects of climate change, such as extreme weather events and natural disasters.

"Without these lawmakers this rulemaking would not have been possible," PST Executive Director Bill Caram said. "We owe them a huge thank you for all their work that was integral in ensuring that PHMSA could undertake this extremely-important rulemaking."

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About Pipeline Safety Trust: The Pipeline Safety Trust is a nonprofit public watchdog promoting pipeline safety through education and advocacy by increasing access to information, and by building partnerships with residents, safety advocates, government and industry, that result in safer communities and a healthier environment.