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May 8, 2025

Alan K. Mayberry
Associate Administrator for Pipeline Safety
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Re: Comment of the Pipeline Safety Trust regarding PHMSA interpretation PI-25-0001 from the Louisiana Department of Energy and Natural Resources

Associate Administrator Mayberry:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the request for interpretation from the Louisiana Department of Energy and Natural Resources (LEDNR) dated January 31, 2025, with identification number PI-25-0001. The Pipeline Safety Trust (PST) is the only national non-profit organization that focuses on pipeline safety. We do this through education and advocacy, increasing access to information, and building partnerships with residents, safety advocates, government, and industry to promote safe communities and a healthy environment.

PST believes that PHMSA's interpretation process provides an important opportunity for pipeline operators, service and equipment providers, government officials, and other interested stakeholders to seek answers to questions about the federal pipeline safety regulations and confirm the appropriate application of the regulations, under specific circumstances. PST appreciates PHMSA's recent revision to the interpretation process to allow the submission and consideration of comments to pending pipeline interpretations.[1]

We have reviewed LEDNR's request for interpretation regarding the defined terms at 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 192 of *distribution center*, *service line*, and *master meter system*. PST offers the following comments for PHMSA to consider in the development of a response to LEDNR's interpretation request.

1. **Distribution Center Definition**

In the notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) "Pipeline Safety: Safety of Gas Transmission and Gathering Pipelines" (*see* 81 FR 20722), PHMSA noticed the definition of distribution center to mean "a location where gas volumes are either metered or have pressure or volume reductions prior to delivery to customers through a distribution line."

[1] PHMSA, *Pending Pipeline Interpretations*, (last accessed May 7, 2025), https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/standards-rulemaking/pipeline/interpretations/pending-pipeline-interpretations.

In the final rule "Pipeline Safety: Safety of Gas Transmission Pipelines: Repair Criteria, Integrity Management Improvements, Cathodic Protection, Management of Change, and Other Related Amendments" (*see* 87 FR 52224), PHMSA modified the definition of distribution center to mean "the initial point where gas enters the piping used primarily to deliver gas to customers who purchase it for consumption, as opposed to customers who purchase it for resale" followed by the examples that were in the proposed definition.

During meetings of the Technical Pipeline Safety Standards Committee, commonly known as the Gas Pipeline Advisory Committee (GPAC), PHMSA suggested to the GPAC that the proposed definition be withdrawn from the final rule. In support of this suggestion, the American Gas Association stated in their comments to the NPRM that PHMSA failed to provide any justification or explanation for its proposed definition. However, the GPAC recommended PHMSA consider revising the definition, based on comments and suggested language from industry representatives attending those meetings.

As a result of this process, PHMSA finalized a definition that was largely unnoticed. Additionally, PHMSA introduced ambiguity by adding the word "primarily" in reference to the usage of piping relative to downstream customer usage. These unnoticed changes result in a vague definition that is not easily understood or applied by state pipeline safety agencies and pipeline operators, as evidenced by this interpretation request from LEDNR.

PST understands the definition of distribution center to be critical in the determination of the boundary between transmission lines and distribution lines, and therefore, the application of regulatory requirements that are based on that determination. PST encourages PHMSA to carefully consider comments previously submitted on this topic and reply with clear guidance to the LEDNR. Additionally, PHMSA should consider further revising and clarifying the definition of distribution center in a future rulemaking to properly justify and explain this definition.

2. **Information Provided by LEDNR is Unclear**

The figures included by the LEDNR, which comprise an aerial image-based map of with differently colored lines presumed to represent the various pipelines and a highlighted pipeline schematic, are not adequately annotated or described by the body of the interpretation request. PST encourages PHMSA to develop or otherwise obtain from LEDNR, adequately annotated figures such that all interested stakeholders can understand the specific circumstances presented in the interpretation request.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on this interpretation request. If you have any questions about this comment or would like to discuss, please contact Erin Sutherland at erin@pstrust.org or (360) 543-5686 x107.

Sincerely,

Erin Sutherland

Erin Sutherland
Policy & Program Director/Counsel