

PIPES ACT

PROTECTING OUR INFRASTRUCTURE OF PIPELINES AND
ENHANCING SAFETY (PIPES) ACT OF 2016

The United States has the most expansive network of energy pipelines in the world, and it powers nearly every facet of our daily activities. The network includes more than 2.6 million miles of pipelines, which transport 64 percent of the energy commodities consumed in the country. Therefore, ensuring that pipelines are a safe means to transport natural gas and hazardous liquids is essential.

The Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) regulates the safety of pipeline facilities at the federal level. PHMSA's regulatory programs are focused on ensuring safety in the design, construction, testing, operation, and maintenance of pipelines.

The 2011 reauthorization of PHMSA's pipeline safety program expired in 2015. The 2011 Act included 42 specific directives for PHMSA to carry out to improve pipeline safety, but thus far PHMSA has completed just over half of them. The PIPES Act of 2016 ensures the agency finishes out the 2011 Act requirements; reforms PHMSA to be a more dynamic, data-driven regulator; and provides regulatory certainty for citizens, the safety community, and the industry.

Improves safety by closing gaps in federal standards

- Requires PHMSA to set federal minimum safety standards for underground natural gas storage facilities, and allows states to go above those standards for intrastate facilities.
- Authorizes emergency order authority that is tailored to the pipeline sector, taking into account public health and safety, network, and customer impacts.
- Updates regulations for certain liquefied natural gas facilities to better match changing technology and markets and take into account national security considerations.
- Increases inspection requirements for certain underwater oil pipelines to enhance safety.
- Ensures that pipeline operators receive timely post-inspection information from PHMSA to allow them to maintain and improve their safety efforts, and ensures that product composition information is quickly provided to first responders after an incident.
- Improves protection of coastal areas, marine coastal waters, and the Great Lakes by explicitly designating them as unusually environmentally sensitive to pipeline failures.



Enhances the quality and timeliness of PHMSA rulemakings

- Requires PHMSA to update Congress every 90 days on outstanding statutory mandates, including the status of each mandate, reasons for its incompleteness, and estimated completion date.
- Requests two Government Accountability Office (GAO) studies on the effectiveness of integrity management programs for both natural gas and hazardous liquids pipelines.

Promotes better use of data and technology to improve pipeline safety

- Tasks GAO with investigating how to use technology to improve third-party damage prevention (a leading cause of releases).
- Requires GAO to study the latest innovations in pipeline materials, corrosion prevention technology, and training.
- Creates a working group of PHMSA, states, industry stakeholders, and safety groups to develop recommendations on how to create an information sharing system to improve safety outcomes.
- Authorizes PHMSA to study the feasibility of a national integrated pipeline safety database to have a clearer picture of federal and state safety oversight efforts.

Leverages federal and state pipeline safety resources

- Authorizes states to participate in interstate pipeline inspections.
- Provides tools to enhance PHMSA's efforts to hire pipeline safety personnel.
- Requires the DOT Inspector General to study staff resource constraints and make recommendations to Congress to address PHMSA's hiring challenges and training needs.

