**BEFORE THE**

**PIPELINE AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS SAFETY ADMINISTRATION**

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**

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| Pipeline Safety: Information Collection Activities, Revisions to Incident and Annual Reports for Gas Pipeline Operators | ) ) ) ) | Docket No. PHMSA–2013–0084 |

# COMMENTS OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC GAS ASSOCIATION

The American Public Gas Association ("APGA") is the national, non-profit association of publicly-owned natural gas distribution systems. APGA was formed in 1961 as a non-profit, non-partisan organization, and currently has approximately 700 members in 36 states. Overall, there are nearly 1,000 municipally-owned systems in the U.S. serving more than five million customers. Publicly-owned gas systems are not-for-profit retail distribution entities that are owned by, and accountable to, the citizens they serve. They include municipal gas distribution systems, public utility districts, county districts, and other public agencies that have natural gas distribution facilities.

In its June 27, 2013 notice PHMSA proposed to remove Part C–Volume Transported by Transmission Lines from its transmission and gathering annual reports because such data is readily available from other federal agencies. In its November 27, 2013 notice PHMSA proposed not only to restore the requirement to report volumes transported but also to expand the requirement to include ''Transmission Lines of Gas Distribution Systems.'' Under current regulations distribution operators are not required to provide volumetric data for transmission they operate as part of their distribution systems.

PHMSA's justification for expanding this reporting requirements was "to make fair comparisons of operator performance, PHMSA needs to know not just miles of pipe, but also the volume delivered by the pipelines included in each annual report." PHMSA has proposed to modify the instructions so that all gas transmission operators are required to submit volume transported data. PHMSA assumed that operators with both gas

transmission and gas distribution assets have the volume transported data readily available, so the reporting burden increase would be minimal.

Approximately 50 municipal gas distribution operators have pipes classified as transmission that are an integral part of their distribution systems, therefore APGA is vitally interested in this rulemaking.

## Comments:

APGA supports the gathering of accurate and timely data about the natural gas pipeline infrastructure. APGA and its members use PHMSA's data in a number of ways to promote pipeline safety. APGA merges the PHMSA distribution annual report data with data from the Energy Information Agency and APGA surveys to create a benchmarking program allowing members to compare their system's performance with national averages or a self-defined peer group. APGA similarly uses the transmission and gathering annual report data to evaluate the impact of PHMSA's regulatory proposals and other safety initiatives.

APGA does not support PHMSA's proposal to continue the collection of volumetric transportation data on its transmission and gathering annual report. Such data is readily available to PHMSA and the public on the website of the Energy Information Agency (EIA) at http://www.eia.gov/cfapps/nggs/nggs.cfm?f_report=RP1.

.In addition, PHMSA has failed to identify any beneficial use for these data. PHMSA states that is needs the data to make "fair comparisons of operator performance," yet provides no explanation of what type of performance comparisons it has or will make using these data. APGA notes that throughput is not a variable used in calculating Potential Impact Radius under the transmission integrity management regulations. Throughput does not affect the safety of a pipeline.

Expanding the reporting of volumes transported to transmission lines operated by distribution operators would be particularly onerous. These transmission lines move gas within the distribution system and, since no custody transfer is involved, may not be equipped with meters to measure the amount of gas flowing through these portions of the distribution system. Requiring these distribution operators to install meters on all the interconnections between their transmission and distribution piping merely to be able to report to PHMSA the volumes transported would impose a cost with no identifiable safety or operational benefit.

**APGA Recommendation:** APGA urges PHMSA to remove from its transmission and gathering annual reports the requirement for operators to report transportation volumes. PHMSA has not explained how such data is necessary for its regulatory analyses or how it has used such data in the past and therefore failed to identify any benefit for its

continued collection. The throughput of a transmission pipeline has no impact on the safety of the pipeline and, should PHMSA ever find a need for such data, it is readily available on the website of the Energy Information Agency. If PHMSA elects to continue collecting volumetric data, it should continue to exempt distribution operators that operate transmission pipelines as part of distribution systems from this reporting because these data may not be readily available and could be very costly to collect and report.

## Conclusion:

APGA supports the collection of timely pipeline safety data. APGA notes that PHMSA recently established a data working group comprised of PHMSA, APGA, other pipeline trade associations, the National Association of Pipeline Safety Representatives, the Pipeline Safety Trust and other stakeholders to advise on future changes to PHMSA's data collection activities. This would be an excellent topic for discussion by that group.

APGA appreciates the opportunity to comment on this proposal. Any questions concerning these comments should be directed to John Erickson, APGA Vice President, Operations (202-464-2742, ext 1002 or jerickson@apga.org).

Bert Kalisch, President and CEO