

Pipeline Safety and Integrity Management

Fact Sheet

Rural gas gathering lines are exempt from federal pipeline safety regulations. The web of unregulated pipelines creates an increased risk to health and safety. BLM did not consider pipeline safety and integrity management in its Draft Resource Management Plan. The following issues were all referenced in the Pipeline Hazardous Materials Safety Administration 2016 Proposed Rulemaking on Gas Pipelines.¹

- **BLM did not consider the impact of extreme weather causing flooding, mudslides and geological instability, which can compromise the integrity of pipelines and result in leaks and potential explosions.** The nation's pipeline system also faces a greater risk from failure due to extreme weather events such as hurricanes, floods, mudslides, tornadoes, and earthquakes. A 2011 crude oil spill into the Yellowstone River near Laurel, MT, was caused by channel migration and river bottom scour, leaving a large span of the pipeline exposed to prolonged current forces and debris washing downstream in the river. Those external forces damaged the exposed pipeline.

In October 1994, flooding along the San Jacinto River led to the failure of eight hazardous liquid pipelines and also undermined a number of other pipelines. The escaping products were ignited, leading to smoke inhalation and burn injuries of 547 people.

From 2003 to 2013, there were 85 reportable incidents in which storms or other severe natural force conditions damaged pipelines and resulted in their failure. Operators reported total damages of over \$104M from these incidents. PHMSA has issued several Advisory Bulletins to operators warning about extreme weather events and the consequences of flooding events, including river scour and river channel migration.

- **BLM did not consider the pipeline safety impacts on hikers, campers, hunters and anglers.** On August 19, 2000, a 30-inch-diameter gas transmission pipeline ruptured adjacent to the Pecos River near Carlsbad, NM. The released gas ignited and burned for 55 minutes. Twelve persons who were camping under a concrete-decked steel bridge that supported the pipeline across the river were killed, and their vehicles were destroyed. Two nearby steel suspension bridges for gas pipelines crossing the river were damaged extensively.

¹ 2016 PHMSA Gas Pipeline proposed rulemaking.

- **BLM did not consider forest fire risks from pipeline explosions.** On December 11, 2012, a 20-inch-diameter gas transmission line ruptured in a sparsely populated area about 106 feet west of Interstate 77 (I-77) in Sissonville, WV. An area of fire damage about 820 feet wide extended nearly 1,100 feet along the pipeline right-of-way. Three houses were destroyed by the fire, and several other houses were damaged. Reported losses, repairs, and upgrades from this incident totaled over \$8.5 million, and major transportation delays occurred. I-77 was closed in both directions because of the fire and resulting damage to the road surface. The northbound lanes were closed for about 14 hours, and the southbound lanes were closed for about 19 hours while the road was resurfaced, causing delays to both travelers and commercial shipping.

In addition, BLM did not consider lack of pipeline safety inspections. The National Association of Pipeline Safety Representatives, an association representing state pipeline safety officials, produced a compendium of state pipeline regulations showing that most states with delegated authority from PHMSA to conduct intrastate inspections do not have expanded regulations that cover increased oversight of gathering companies building gathering pipelines in rural areas are generally not subject to inspection and do not have to report the location and characteristics of much of the gathering pipelines being installed.²

A no leasing alternative is not only reasonable, but represents the best way to protect the North Fork Valley now and in the future.



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² *OIL AND GAS TRANSPORTATION: Department of Transportation Is Taking Actions to Address Rail Safety, but Additional Actions Are Needed to Improve Pipeline Safety*, Government Accounting Office, August 2014, p27.