



Federal Railroad Administration
Office of Public Affairs
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Federal Railroad Administration and Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration Hazmat/Crude Oil FAQ

Q: Is it safer to use pipelines to transport oil and petroleum products compared to other modes of transportation?

A: The safest mode of transportation between any two points is determined by a wide variety of factors, including the availability of service, regional attributes such as topography, climate and environmental considerations, traffic patterns, population density and other factors. The U.S. Department of Transportation's role is to make sure that whatever mode is chosen by freight shippers, the products are transported safely and reliably.

Q: What rules/regulations are in place for railroads regarding emergency preparedness for hazardous material train accidents, particularly in event of spills?

A: 49 CFR Part 174.26 requires train crews to have documentation on the contents of each HM car and its position in a train for use as emergency response information <http://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0444>. 172 Subpart G provides the requirements for the emergency response information to be maintained during transportation including facilities that transload and store HM commodities incidental to transportation. <http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&SID=c943448b48e18fa34a91181620588022&rgn=div6&view=text&node=49:2.1.1.3.8.7&idno=49>

Q: How can a community learn what hazardous materials are traveling through their towns by rail? A: The AAR has a program to provide local first responders (upon written request) a list of the top 25 hazmat commodities transported through their communities on an annualized basis in order to assist emergency responders with prepping for any emergency involving those materials. Railroads are not required to provide this info, but do so under an AAR-sponsored program.

Q: How can a community learn what hazardous materials are traveling through their towns by pipeline?

A: PHMSA hosts the National Pipeline Mapping System and online pipeline profiles for every state, which include incident, enforcement and mileage data as well as contact information for the state's pipeline regulatory authority.

Q: What kind of rules/regulations are in place for pipeline operators regarding emergency preparedness for hazardous material spills?

A: PHMSA requires pipeline operators to establish emergency plans, or written procedures, to minimize hazards associated with a pipeline emergency. As part of an operator's emergency plan, they must implement procedures that allow them to establish and maintain adequate communication with

appropriate emergency response officials, take appropriate actions to protect the public, and notify and coordinate with emergency response personnel any planned or actual responses taken during such an emergency.

Q: Does the federal government offer any guidance to local communities for dealing with hazmat spills?

A: The Environmental Protection Agency and The Occupational Safety & Health Administration are the agencies that would provide such guidance.

Q: What is the FRA doing to address the increases in hazmat traffic on our Nation's rails?

A: We are taking several steps to address increases in crude oil rail traffic throughout the United States. Under our Rail Accident Mitigation Project (RAMP), we are conducting additional hazardous materials safety inspections in the Bakken Region. We are also facilitating hazardous materials safety training seminars with shippers, consignees, contractors, and sub-contractors. To the extent that increased rail and truck traffic poses an increased risk of collision at highway-rail crossings, we are working with stakeholders, participating agencies, local officials and rail carriers on grade crossing safety and trespass prevention. Our efforts include working with law enforcement to increase patrols at grade crossings and expanding educational outreach to increase awareness about grade crossing safety.

Q: What is the FRA's role in regulating hazmat transport?

A: The FRA is responsible for enforcing federal rail safety and hazardous materials laws, rules and regulations. We perform routine inspections, audits, and investigations of hazmat releases that result from train accidents as well as hazmat releases from non-accident events. Violations of federal regulations may result in enforcement actions including fines being levied against a railroad, individuals or companies which offer hazmat for rail transportation.

Q: Who regulates the safety of the nation's pipeline system?

A: The federal authority for pipeline safety is PHMSA, the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration of the U.S. Department of Transportation. PHMSA's Office of Pipeline Safety is responsible for regulating the safety of design, construction, testing, operation, maintenance, and emergency response of U.S. oil and natural gas pipeline facilities.

Q: What kinds of products are transported through energy pipelines?

A: Pipelines transport various types of energy products used across the nation, including crude oil and refined products made from crude oil, such as gasoline, home heating oil, diesel fuel, jet fuels, and kerosene. In addition to these products, pipelines also transport carbon dioxide, ethylene, propane, butane, ammonia, and natural gas.

Q: What can you tell me about our nation's pipelines?

A: Pipelines are considered a transportation system and are one of the safest ways to transport the extraordinary quantities of energy products used by industry and consumers to fuel our economy and way of life. The arteries of the nation's energy infrastructure, a combined network of over 2.6 million miles of oil and gas pipelines help provide the resources needed for national defense, heat and cool our homes, generate power for business and fuel an unparalleled transportation system.

Q: How much product can pipelines transport?

A: The nation's more than 2.6 million miles of pipelines safely deliver trillions of cubic feet of natural gas and hundreds of billions of ton/miles of liquid petroleum products each year.