

**Department of Transportation
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
Office of Pipeline Safety**

**Supporting Statement
Pipeline Safety: Periodic Underwater Inspection and Notification of Abandoned
Underwater Pipelines
OMB Control No. 2137-0618**

INTRODUCTION

The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) requests of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) a renewal, without change, of an information collection entitled, “Pipeline Safety: Periodic Underwater Inspection and Notification of Abandoned Underwater Pipelines” under OMB Control No. 2137-0618, which is currently due to expire on October 31, 2021.

Part A. Justification

1. Circumstances that make collection of information necessary.

Twice in the late 1980’s fishing vessels struck shallow water offshore gas pipelines in the Gulf of Mexico. These incidents resulted in the deaths of 13 fishermen. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) recommended that PHMSA develop and implement requirements to ensure pipeline operators inspect and maintain submerged pipelines in areas subject to damage by surface vessels. Congress also required the Department of Transportation to establish a mandatory, systematic and, where appropriate, periodic pipeline inspection and reburial program for shallow water submerged pipelines. In compliance, the Federal pipeline safety regulations at 49 CFR §§192.612 and 195.413 require operators to conduct appropriate underwater inspections in the Gulf of Mexico. If the operator finds pipeline exposed on the seabed floor or a hazard to navigation, the operator must contact the National Response Center by telephone within 24 hours of discovery and report the location of the exposed pipeline.

Underwater pipelines are being abandoned at an increasing rate as older facilities reach the end of their useful life. This trend is expected to continue. In 1992, Congress responded to this issue by amending the Pipeline Safety Act (49 U.S.C. 60108(c)(6)(B)) to direct the Secretary of Transportation to require operators of an offshore pipeline facility or a pipeline crossing navigable waters to report the abandonment to the Secretary of Transportation in a way that specifies whether the facility has been abandoned properly according to applicable Federal and State requirements. Operators must notify PHMSA of each abandoned offshore pipeline facility or each abandoned onshore pipeline facility that crosses over, under or through a commercially navigable waterway.

PHMSA's regulations for abandonment reporting can be found at Title 49 CFR 192.727, 195.402, and 195.59

This information collection promotes the U.S. DOT's Safety and Environmental Strategic Goals by reducing the hazard to navigation posed by underwater pipelines. These requirements also reduce the risk of rupture due to collisions with marine vessels. Ruptures can cause explosions and/or fuel spills that could cause fatal human accidents and harm nearby wildlife. This information collection request also supports DOT's safety performance goal of reducing total incidents for gas and hazardous liquid pipelines which directly supports the DOT's safety strategic objective of enhancing public health and safety by working toward the elimination of transportation-related deaths and injuries.

2. How, by whom, and for what purpose is the information used.

The information collection associated with this renewal will improve safety and environmental protection by providing a source point for safety notices to mariners of navigational hazards. The reports provide PHMSA with the information necessary to evaluate the risk posed by these underwater pipelines. PHMSA will use the information to more accurately assess the risks to pipeline infrastructure, understand emerging safety related trends, and identify opportunities for improving the regulatory system for underwater pipelines.

3. Extent of automated information collection.

Operators must make initial notification of exposed pipeline on the seabed by telephone to the National Response Center (NRC). The periodic underwater inspections can be recorded and kept internally within each pipeline operator's office. This collection also allows PHMSA to determine compliance (on the part of the operator) with current abandonment requirements in an effort to meet public safety goals.

4. Efforts to identify duplication.

No other collection requires operators to report shallow water pipeline in the Gulf of Mexico found to be exposed pipeline or a hazard to navigation. OPS is not aware of any other entity that maintains a central repository of abandoned underwater pipeline reports.

5. Efforts to minimize the effects on small business.

PHMSA expects impacted operators to be large and small businesses and therefore the requirement may impact small businesses. In an effort to minimize the burden on small businesses, PHMSA allows for the submission of data in a variety of methods that are economically suitable for each operator as appropriate.

6. Impact of less frequent collection of information.

PHMSA would not be able to adequately assess potential risks associated with these pipelines, which could potentially be detrimental to the pipeline safety and the protection of the environment. Therefore, less frequent information collection could compromise the safety of the U.S. pipeline system and the environment.

7. Special circumstances.

No special circumstances apply with this regulation.

8. Compliance with 5 CFR 1320.8.

PHMSA published a 60-Day Notice in the Federal Register [86 FR 9568] on February 16, 2021. PHMSA received no comments pertaining to this information collection.

Additionally, PHMSA maintains an “open-door” policy with its stakeholders where continual engagement on ways to improve pipeline safety are routine. In this vein, PHMSA has participated in various discussions where updates on this information collection were provided.

9. Payments or gifts to respondents.

The disbursement of payment and gifts is not applicable to this information collection.

10. Assurance of confidentiality.

PHMSA does not have the authority to guarantee confidentiality.

11. Justification for collection of sensitive information.

No sensitive information will be collected.

12. Estimate of burden hours for information requested.

The overall burden estimate of this collection is 1,372 hours. This estimate covers the burden associated with the collection of both underwater inspection reports and the reporting of the abandonment of underwater pipelines.

Based on the number of operators filing annual reports, there are 82 operators with underwater pipeline in the States adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico. The annual record keeping and reporting requirements are estimated to take 16 hours per operator. Therefore, PHMSA estimates a burden of 1,312 hours (82 operators * 16 hours.)

The burden associated with the collection of abandoned underwater pipeline notifications is approximately 60 hours. Based on past experience, it is assumed that an average of 10 notifications will be submitted annually. Note that one submission can contain multiple line

abandonment notifications. The time to complete a report is estimated by the American Gas Association as approximately 6 hours for a total annual burden hour estimate of 60 hours. (10 operators * 6 hours.)

The total burden estimate for this collection is **1,372 hours** (1,312 + 60) with a total of **92 responses** (82+10.)

All submissions are assumed to be filled out by a senior engineer whose fully-loaded hourly cost (i.e., salary plus overhead) is estimated to \$64.75. The associated cost is expected to be **\$88,837** (= 1,372 burden hours x \$64.75) annually.

13. Estimate of total annual costs to respondents.

PHMSA does not anticipate any costs other than those detailed in question number 12.

14. Estimate of cost to the Federal Government.

Currently, 100 Federal inspectors spend an estimated 10 percent of their time reviewing records retained by gas pipeline operators. The average salary of a Federal transportation inspector is \$107,630.

This calculates to an estimated annual cost to the Federal Government of:

100 (Federal inspectors) x \$107,630 (mean salary) x 0.10 (time) = \$1,076,300.

15. Explanation of program changes or adjustments.

PHMSA is requesting a renewal, without change, of this information collection. As such, there have been no program changes or adjustments made since the last approval of this collection.

16. Publication of results of data collection.

Operators are required to telephone the National Response Center (NRC). The NRC maintains a website where the information is displayed.

17. Approval for not displaying the expiration date for OMB approval.

PHMSA is not requesting approval to not display the OMB approval expiration date.

18. Exceptions to certification statement.

There are no exceptions to the certification statement.