

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**Research and Special Programs Administration****Issuance of Advisory Bulletin**

AGENCY: Research and Special Programs Administration, (RSPA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice; issuance of advisory bulletin.

SUMMARY: We are issuing this advisory bulletin to owners and operators of Hazardous Liquid and Natural Gas Pipelines. The bulletin advises the industry about the potential for damage to pipeline facilities caused by the passage of Hurricane Georges.

ADDRESSES: This document can be viewed on our home page at: <http://ops.dot.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Linda Daugherty, (202) 366-4577.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**I. Background**

The purpose of this Notice is to advise all operators of natural gas and hazardous liquid pipelines located in offshore waters of the Gulf of Mexico of recurring safety problems that may be resulting from the passage of Hurricane Georges. Operators should be advised that we have received several reports of damage to pipeline facilities, particularly in the area bounded, East of the Mississippi River and West of Mobil Bay.

Several mudslides in this area may have exposed pipelines which could pose a safety threat to the crews of fishing vessels in shallow coastal waters and to other marine operations in shipping lanes and deeper offshore waters. Extensive onshore flooding may also have exposed or weakened facilities. We are working with the Minerals Management Service, the Coast Guard, and the Army Corps of Engineers to address the potential hazards of exposed or weakened pipeline facilities in areas affected by Hurricane Georges. This Notice reminds operators of offshore pipelines that may have been affected by flooding of Federal pipeline safety requirements. We are advising pipeline operators of similar problems that may occur in inland navigable waterways. Also, we are advising the commercial fishing industry of the potential of unburied offshore pipelines by sending this Notice to Louisiana Shrimp Association, Texas Shrimp Association, Southeastern Fisheries Association, National Fish Meal & Oil Association, and Concerned Shrimpers of America. Pipeline operators or mariners aware of any damage or

exposure to a portion of a submerged pipeline should report that information to the appropriate US Coast Guard District. The Coast Guard has issued a radio advisory to vessel operators operating in or near the mouth of the Mississippi and an advisory in its Notice to Mariners.

II. Advisory Bulletin (ADB-98-3)

To: Owners and Operators of Hazardous Liquid and Natural Gas Pipelines.

Subject: Recurring safety problems which may be resulting from the passage of Hurricane Georges.

Purpose: We are advising all operators of natural gas and hazardous liquid pipelines located in offshore waters and other areas that may have been impacted by flooding due to the passage of Hurricane Georges. The recent passage of Hurricane Georges and major storms may have contributed to the exposure or instability of pipelines in the vicinity of the Gulf of Mexico.

Advisory: On October 1, 1998, a 10-inch pipeline located in the Gulf of Mexico south of the Mississippi River; in an unstable mudslide area with a water depth of 108 feet, ruptured and released an estimated 3,700 barrels of crude oil. Other reported incidents include pipeline exposures and natural gas and hazardous liquid releases.

Our pipeline regulations require operators to patrol their lines periodically for the presence of unusual operating and maintenance conditions and to take corrective action if conditions are unsafe. Because this patrolling is generally done using aircraft, pipelines exposed or damaged on the seafloor can not be visually detected. It is likely that some pipelines located in the area of Hurricane Georges' impact are exposed or damaged. It is important to note that if a pipeline operator has knowledge that its pipeline is exposed or otherwise presenting a danger to the public or the environment, 49 CFR sections 192.613 and 192.703 applicable to gas pipeline operators, and 49 CFR section 195.401 applicable to hazardous liquid pipeline operators would require the operator to take steps to mitigate the hazard. Additionally, 49 CFR sections 192.612(b) and 195.413(b) require that, if upon notification by any person, an operator discovers that a pipeline it operates is exposed on the seabed or constitutes a hazard to navigation, it shall promptly notify the National Response Center (1-800-424-8802) with the geographic coordinates of that pipeline, mark the location of the pipeline in accordance with 64 CFR, and within six months of discovery, place the pipeline so that the top of the

pipe is 36 inches below the seabed for normal excavation or 18 inches for rock excavation.

In view of the above, pipeline operators should consider taking the following actions regarding the natural gas and hazardous liquid pipelines located in areas impacted by Hurricane Georges.

1. Identify and caution persons who normally engage in commercial fishing, shrimping, and other marine vessel operations in shallow coastal waters where Hurricane Georges may have affected a pipeline. Submerged offshore pipelines may have become unprotected on the ocean floor. Marine vessels operating in water depths comparable to a vessel's draft or when operating bottom dragging equipment can be damaged and their crews endangered by an encounter with a submerged pipeline. The pipeline company's public education and damage prevention programs may be used to facilitate this notification process. Pipeline operators may want to consider a joint public education effort in areas of common concern.

2. Identify and caution marine vessel operators in offshore shipping lanes and other offshore areas where Hurricane Georges may have affected a pipeline that deploying fishing nets or anchors, and dredging operations may damage the pipeline, their vessels, and endanger their crews. The pipeline company's public education and damage prevention programs may be used to facilitate this notification process. Pipeline operators may want to consider a joint public education effort in areas of common concern.

3. Identify and correct any conditions on the pipeline that could violate pipeline safety requirements, and the terms and conditions of the pipeline's Corps of Engineers permit.

Issued in Washington, D.C. on November 6, 1998.

Richard B. Felder,

Associate Administrator for Pipeline Safety.

[FR Doc. 98-30279 Filed 11-10-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-60-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY**Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request**

November 4, 1998.

The Department of the Treasury has submitted the following public information collection requirement(s) to OMB for review and clearance under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, Public Law 104-13. Copies of the