applications of Mexican carriers for operating authority beyond the border commercial zones. Unless the Ninth Circuit Court decision is reversed or the relevant terms of the DOT Appropriations Acts are not extended, FMCSA cannot process applications of Mexico-domiciled motor carriers seeking authority to operate beyond the border commercial zones until a PEIS and General Conformity Evaluation have been completed and considered by FMCSA. Implementing the Certification rule will not affect that prohibition.

Further, the Certification rule standing alone will have no impact on prospective Mexican truck and bus operations beyond the border commercial zones. For example, it will not affect either the number of Mexico-domiciled vehicles entering the United States or the number and duration of safety inspections of these vehicles. Indeed, unlike the application and safety monitoring rules, which apply solely to Mexico-domiciled motor carriers, the only connection between the Certification rule and the operation of Mexican carriers beyond the border commercial zones is the contingency Congress created when it made issuance of the rule one of the preconditions to the processing of these carriers' applications for operating authority.

As noted above, FMCSA received no public comments in response to the EA. Following the close of the public comment period, the agency prepared a Finding of No Significant Impact document for the Certification rule. FMCSA's full Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact are available in the docket.

In accordance with the agency's statutory obligation under 49 U.S.C. 31148(b), FMCSA and its State partners will comply with the statutory certification requirement effective January 1, 2004.

Issued on: December 18, 2003.

Annette M. Sandberg,

Administrator.

[FR Doc. 03–31597 Filed 12–22–03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–EX–P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Research and Special Programs Administration

Pipeline Safety: Potential Service Disruptions in Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition Systems

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

ACTION: Notice; issuance of advisory bulletin.

SUMMARY: RSPA's Office of Pipeline Safety (RSPA/OPS) is issuing this advisory notice to owners and operators of gas and hazardous liquid pipelines who use Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems. Pipeline owners and operators should establish thorough testing regimes when they design and implement modifications and enhancements of their SCADA systems. Owners and operators should consider using off-line or developmental workstations to test changes, then deploy the changes on-line under close monitoring at times when few operational changes are expected on the pipeline. Applying these techniques will help ensure that changes in the SCADA system environment do not have an unexpected effect on pipeline operations.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Richard Huriaux, (202) 366–4565; or by e-mail, *richard.huriaux@rspa.dot.gov.* This document can be viewed at the RSPA/OPS home page at *http://ops.dot.gov.* General information about the RSPA/OPS programs can be obtained by accessing RSPA's home page at *http://rspa.dot.gov.*

I. Advisory Bulletin (ADB–03–09)

To: Owners and Operators of Gas and Hazardous Liquid Pipeline Systems Who Use SCADA Systems.

Subject: Potential Service Disruptions in SCADA Systems.

Purpose: To inform pipeline owners and operators of the potential for service disruptions in SCADA systems caused by maintenance or enhancements of SCADA system configuration and other critical databases, and the possibility of those disruptions leading to or aggravating pipeline releases.

Advisory: Each pipeline owner or operator should review their procedures for the upgrading, configuring, maintaining, and enhancing its SCADA system. If not well thought out and thoroughly tested, such changes could cause inadvertent service disruptions in the SCADA system. Resulting conditions could may impede controllers responsible for operating the pipeline from promptly recognizing and reacting to abnormal conditions, and could potentially impact the controllers' abilities to restore normal operations. Owners and operators should ensure that SCADA system modifications do not degrade overall SCADA performance to an unacceptable level. To further reduce the potential effect of service disruptions, responsible personnel should coordinate significant and non-routine SCADA modifications to occur at times when no significant changes to pipeline operations are anticipated.

It is good practice for owners and operators of pipeline systems to periodically review their SCADA system configurations, operating procedures, and performance measurements to ensure that the SCADA computer servers are functioning as intended. Owners and operators should consider using off-line or development workstations/servers to help ensure that impending changes are tested as thoroughly as possible before moving the changes into production. Although off-line or development workstations can be valuable, they may not fully represent timing, load and other factors that will be present in the production environment. System modifications should be implemented via structured and managed processes to reduce the likelihood of unforeseen problems. Such controlled processes are especially important if an owner or operator makes changes directly in the on-line environment.

In addition, owners or operators should periodically confirm that associated design and maintenance personnel, whether employees, contractors, or third-party providers, are adequately skilled to perform SCADA system modifications without causing undesirable consequences. These same personnel should be cognizant of the critical system attributes that should be monitored during the testing phase of implementation.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

II. Background

This advisory bulletin responds to National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Recommendation P–02–05, which suggested that RSPA/OPS: ''[i]ssue an advisory bulletin to all pipeline owners and operators who use supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) systems advising them to implement an off-line workstation that can be used to modify their SCADA system database or to perform developmental and testing work independent of their on-line systems. Advise owners and operators to use the off-line system before any modifications are implemented to ensure that those modifications are error-free and that they create no ancillary problems for controllers responsible for operating the pipeline.''

During an earlier investigation of a pipeline incident, RSPA/OPS inspectors identified inadequate SCADA performance as an operational safety

concern, and published advisory bulletin ADB–99–03 on July 16, 1999 (64 FR 38501). That advisory identified eroding SCADA performance as a contributing factor to the accident.

Through subsequent analysis, it has become apparent that SCADA performance in general can be adversely impacted by system configuration changes, upgrades, or modifications to critical databases. There are several ways that pipeline owners and operators can reduce the risk of such conditions:

(1) Ensure that personnel assigned to these duties are adequately skilled in the maintenance and upgrading of the SCADA system configuration and critical databases.

(2) Know what critical metrics can be monitored that provide thorough and representative measures of system performance during testing and after the changes are implemented.

(3) Consider making the changes first on an isolated, off-line, or development workstation or processor, to test the effect of the changes prior to moving the work into the production environment.

(4) Recognize that the use of off-line or development workstations/servers to test impending changes can be valuable, but probably does not fully represent timing, load, and other factors present in the production environment.

(5) Know the limits and bounds of the testing regime, so that adequate and targeted vigilance may be applied during final testing and after initial implementation into the production environment.

(6) Coordinate significant and non-routine SCADA system modifications with pipeline controller operating personnel, so that revisions are implemented and tested at times when no significant changes to pipeline operations are anticipated.

Although NTSB Recommendation P–02–05 called only for an advisory bulletin, RSPA/OPS has taken additional actions to improve SCADA and controller operations and our inspection process. RSPA/OPS has initiated a study on the safety evaluation of pipeline SCADA technology. In early 2004, RSPA/OPS will revise its SCADA inspection protocols. Later in 2004, RSPA/OPS will begin development of a new, multi-tiered approach to inspection of SCADA systems.

RSPA/OPS has also initiated a study of Controller Certification in compliance with Section 13(b) of the Pipeline Safety Improvement Act of 2002. Section 13(b) of the Pipeline Safety Improvement Act of 2002 (PSIA), directs the Secretary of Transportation to develop tests and other requirements for certifying the qualifications of individuals who operate computer-based systems for controlling the operations of pipelines. The RSPA/OPS project team is evaluating current operator personnel qualification practices for pipeline controllers in collaboration with a study team sponsored by the gas and hazardous liquid industry. RSPA/OPS will develop an approach to certification programs and will undertake pilot testing. Through research and pilot program evaluations, RSPA/OPS will determine the best combination of prescriptive and performance-based requirements that should be considered as certification criteria for pipeline controllers.

Issued in Washington, DC on December 17, 2003.

Stacey L. Gerard,

Associate Administrator for Pipeline Safety.

[FR Doc. 03–31574 Filed 12–22–03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–60–P

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Internal Revenue Service

Proposed Collection; Comment Request for Form 8453–S

AGENCY: Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Treasury.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Department of the Treasury, as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden, invites the general public and other Federal agencies to take this opportunity to comment on proposed and/or continuing information collections, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, Pub. L. 104–13 (44 U.S.C. 3506(c)(2)(A)). Currently, the IRS is soliciting comments concerning Form 8453–S, S Corporation Declaration and Signature for Electronic Filing.

DATES: Written comments should be received on or before February 23, 2004 to be assured of consideration.

ADDRESSES: Direct all written comments to Robert M. Coar, Internal Revenue Service, room 6411, 1111 Constitution Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20224.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests for additional information or copies of the form and instructions should be directed to Carol Savage at Internal Revenue Service, room 6407, 1111 Constitution Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20224, or at (202) 622–3945, or through the internet at *CAROL.A.SAVAGE@irs.gov.*

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: S Corporation Declaration and Signature for Electronic Filing.

OMB Number: 1545–1867.

Form Number: 8453–S.

Abstract: Form 8453–S is necessary to enable the electronic filing of Form 1120S U.S. Income Tax Return for an S Corporation. The form is created to meet the stated Congressional policy that paperless filing is the preferred and most convenient means of filing Federal tax and information returns.

Current Actions: There are no changes being made to the form at this time.

Type of Review: Extension of a currently approved collection.

Affected Public: Businesses or other for-profit organizations.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 2,500,000.

Estimated Time Per Respondent: 7 hours, 1 minute.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 17,550,000.

The following paragraph applies to all of the collections of information covered by this notice:

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless the collection of information displays a valid OMB control number. Books or records relating to a collection of information must be retained as long as their contents may become material in the administration of any internal revenue law. Generally, tax returns and tax return information are confidential, as required by 26 U.S.C. 6103.

Request for Comments: Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized and/or included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will become a matter of public record. Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the collection of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology; and (e) estimates of capital or start-up costs and costs of operation, maintenance, and purchase of services to provide information.

Approved: December 17, 2003.

Robert M. Coar,

IRS Reports Clearance Officer.

[FR Doc. 03–31616 Filed 12–22–03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4830–01–P