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News

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U.S. Transportation Secretary Foxx Appoints 24 Members to the New Pipeline Safety Voluntary Information-Sharing System Working Group

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) today announced the appointment of 24 members to the new pipeline safety Voluntary Information-Sharing System (VIS) Working Group. The VIS Working Group is a newly created advisory committee that will provide the Secretary of Transportation with advice and recommendations related to pipeline safety, including whether an information-sharing system for pipeline owners and operators is needed, ways to encourage the exchange of pipeline inspection information, and best practices for protecting proprietary and security-sensitive information.

"This is an important step to enhancing safety and making it easier to share best practices," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. "The new VIS Working Group will not only utilize the expertise of the pipeline industry, but it will encourage collaboration in the way information is used and exchanged regarding pipeline assets and activities to impact safety."

The final appointments for the VIS Working Group were made today by Secretary Foxx based on the requirements in the November 8 Federal Register notice requesting nominations.

The members of the VIS Working Group are:

PHMSA Representative

Name	Title	Organization
Alan Mayberry	Associate Administrator for Pipeline Safety	Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration

State Public Utility Commissioners/State Officials

Name	Title	Organization
Diane Burman	Commissioner	New York State Public Service Commission
Sherina Edwards	Commissioner	Illinois Commerce Commission

State Pipeline Safety Inspectors

Name	Title	Organization
Joe Subsits	Chief Pipeline Safety Engineer	Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission
Michelle Thebert	Director, Facilities Protection Unit	Georgia Public Service Commission

Safety Advocacy Groups

Name	Title	Organization
Kate Blystone	Outreach Manager	Pipeline Safety Trust
Dr. Simona Perry	Research Director and Founder	Pipeline Safety Coalition

Labor Representatives

Name	Title	Organization
John MacNeill	National Safety Director	Utility Workers Union of America
Eric Sherman	Legislative Assistant	Native American Contractors Association
Walter Jones	Associate Director of Occupational Safety & Health	Laborers' Health & Safety Fund of North America

Industry Stakeholders

Name	Title	Organization
Leif Jensen	Senior Director of Asset Integrity	Sunoco Logistics
Dan Cote	Vice President of Pipeline Safety & Compliance	NiSource Gas
Eric Amundsen	Vice President	Panhandle Energy/Energy Transfer Partners
Bryce Brown	Vice President, Group Strategy Management	The ROSEN Group
Jason Cradit	Senior Director of Technology	TRC Oil and Gas
Alicia Farag	President & CEO	LocusView Solutions
Mark Zuniga	Vice President of Information Technology	UniversalPegasus International, Inc.
Robert Buchanan	General Manager	Seal for Life Industries
Christopher Warner	Senior Vice President	Mears Group, Inc.
Mike LaMont	Vice President	Integrity Plus
Mark Hereth	Principal	Process Performance Improvement Consultants

Research Institutions

Name	Title	Organization
Dr. Yiming Deng	Associate Professor	Michigan State University
Michael Keller	Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering	University of Tulsa

Other Entities

Name	Title	Organization
Holly Pearen	Senior Attorney	Environmental Defense Fund

The VIS Working Group will discuss collaborative efforts to improve pipeline inspection information sharing. The group will develop recommendations on how to best establish a voluntary information-sharing system to exchange and protect pipeline safety and inspection-related data.

"Voluntary information sharing is a critical next step in achieving a greater safety threshold in the pipeline industry," said PHMSA Administrator Marie Therese Dominguez. "Today's appointments by Secretary Foxx task a diverse and robust group of experts with providing critical recommendations in how we can use and share data to further improve pipeline safety."

Specifically, the VIS Working Group will offer recommendations on the best ways to:

- Identify the need for a system to confidentially share pipeline dig verification data with in-line inspection operators;
- Encourage the sharing of pipeline inspection information and the development of advanced pipeline inspection technologies;
- Share data to increase knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages of the varying types of in-line inspection technologies;
- Create a secure system that protects proprietary information while also encouraging information sharing and the development of advanced pipeline inspection technologies;
- Protect safety- and security-sensitive information, as well as proprietary information; and
- Determine associated regulatory, funding, and legal issues.

The VIS Working Group's recommendations will be published on PHMSA's website.

The VIS Working Group will convene its first meeting on December 19, 2016, at the Hilton Arlington, located at 950 North Stafford Street, Arlington, VA 22203. This meeting will take place from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm and is open to the public. PHMSA will publish the meeting agenda, and any additional information on the VIS Working Group web page at: http://www.phmsa.dot.gov/pipeline/regs/technical-advisory-comm/voluntary-information-sharing-system-working-group.

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The mission of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration is to protect people and the environment by advancing the safe transportation of energy and other hazardous materials that are essential to our daily lives. PHMSA develops and enforces regulations for the safe operation of the nation's 2.6 million mile pipeline transportation system and the nearly one million daily shipments of hazardous materials by land, sea, and air. Please visit http://phmsa.dot.gov or https://twitter.com/PHMSA_DOT for more information.