

## Opening

Good morning Chairman Lipinski, Ranking Member Crawford, Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) to testify today.

The NTSB is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating major transportation disasters – including pipelines. We determine the probable cause of accidents and issue safety recommendations aimed at preventing future tragedies and saving lives.

Pipelines are one of the safest and most efficient modes of transportation, but when safety standards are inadequate or disregarded – or when federal or state agencies fail to conduct proper oversight – the consequences can be devastating.

During this hearing, I'll likely be asked about a number of NTSB investigations so I want to take a moment to – once again – extend our deepest condolences to all those who've lost loved ones or have been impacted by pipeline tragedies.

Now I want to thank each of you. Over the years, Congress has been a true partner in advancing many of the NTSB's safety recommendations.

Working together, we've saved lives. In 1998, we investigated a gas pipeline explosion and fire in South Riding, Virginia. A family was spending their first night in their new home. Tragically, the wife was killed and the husband and both children were injured. We determined that had an excess flow valve been installed on the line, the accident would never have occurred.

The NTSB had been recommending the installation of these valves for nearly 30 years. In 2006, this Committee took action and mandated their installation on new single-family residential lines. In 2012, you expanded that requirement to multi-family residences and small commercial facilities. I am proud to say that, in 2016, we closed that recommendation favorably following issuance of the final rule.

Now we need to turn our attention to closing 36 open NTSB safety recommendations, 3 of which are designated as "open unacceptable action". Many of these are included in our Most Wanted List of Transportation Safety Improvements. Some were addressed in the 2011 and 2016 Acts but haven't been implemented. Yet tragedies continue to occur.

## Automatic and remote-control shutoff valves/leak detection

Two significant NTSB recommendations urge the installation of automatic shutoff or remote control valves in high consequence areas and address repeated failures of pipeline operators to detect ruptures and leaks and take appropriate action.

In 2010, a gas transmission pipeline ruptured and ignited in San Bruno, California. It took the operator 95 minutes to stop the flow of gas and severely hindered emergency response operations: tragically, 8 people were killed and many more were injured. [38 homes were destroyed; another 70 were damaged]

That same year, a pipeline rupture occurred in Marshall, Michigan, which released nearly a million gallons of heavy crude oil in surrounding waterways and communities. It took the operator 17 hours to identify the rupture and shut down the line.

And in 2015, we investigated a release of 4,000 gallons of gasoline from a pipeline in Centerville, Virginia. The operator didn't detect the leak for two days, well after fire fighters had contacted pipeline personnel, who assured them that there were no irregularities on the line.

The fact is that most pipeline ruptures and leaks aren't detected by pipeline operators; they're detected by the public and emergency responders. Research that was mandated by Congress in 2011 shows that only 17% of releases are identified by control room operators.

The NTSB has been studying the effects of delay in shutting down failed pipeline systems since 1970. We've issued recommendation after recommendation to address our concerns; and in 2011, Congress required their implementation, yet they remain unaddressed.

With respect to additional safety needs, PHMSA regulations require pipeline operators to accurately identify high consequence areas, determine threats to their pipelines, continually evaluate those lines using appropriate inspection methods, and repair any defects identified. This is known as integrity management.

We've investigated three accidents which raise significant concerns with how operators are implementing these programs. As a result, the NTSB has issued 28 recommendations to improve integrity management, 10 of which remain on our Most Wanted List. I've attached them to my written statement, and request that they be included in the hearing record.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions.