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# Transcontinental Pipeline Company, LLC/Williams Partners, L.P.: U.S. Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration Notice of Probable Violation-Proposed Civil Penalty/Compliance Order

## Arkansas Environmental, Energy, and Water Law Blog

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The United States Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration ("PHMSA") issued a Notice of Probable Violation Proposed Civil Penalty and Proposed Compliance Order ("Notice") on July 29<sup>th</sup> to Transcontinental Pipeline Company, LLC ("Transco"), a subsidiary of Williams Partners, L.P. See CPF 4-2016-1008.

PHMSA alleges that Transco committed probable violations of the Pipeline Safety Regulations which are found in Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

The Notice apparently relates to Transco's Station 62 Facility at Bayou Black, LA ("facility") operated by the company. The facility is stated to have experienced a reportable incident that resulted in a series of explosions, fire, four fatalities, two injuries, evacuations of nearby residences and closure of a state highway.

Representatives of PHMSA, Office of Pipeline Safety are stated to have responded to the facility and initiated an investigation into events surrounding the incident. As part of the incident investigation PHMSA is stated to have inspected Transco's procedures, records and pipeline facilities that were involved in the incident from October 9, 2015 through May 26, 2016.

The items inspected and the probable violations are alleged to include:

1. 49 CFR § 191.5  
Immediate notice of certain events (alleging that the operator failed to provide all significant facts relevant to the extent of the incident when it gave notice to the National Response Center).
2. 49 CFR § 192.751  
Prevention of accidental ignition (alleging the operator failed to take adequate steps to minimize the ignition of gas in an area where the presence of gas curing welding constituted a combustion hazard).

3. 49 CFR § 192.605  
Procedural manual for operations, maintenance, and emergencies (alleging the operator failed to follow its Hot Work procedure, *WilSOP Safety Manual procedure 640.05 – Hot Work*, to require training for all employees supervising or issuing Hot Work Permits).
4. 49 CFR § 192.805  
Qualification Program (alleging the operator failed to follow its written Operator Qualification Plan in four instances).
5. 49 CFR § 192.605  
Procedural manual for operations, maintenance, and emergencies (alleging the operator failed to follow its Williams WilSOP Operations & Maintenance Manual procedure 10.22.02- Gas Handling Plans by not developing a detailed purge plan for the complex purging of the slug catcher with engineering support and District Manager approval to ensure a safe purge, as required by Section 2.40 of the procedure).

The Compliance Officer is stated to have reviewed the circumstances and supporting documents involved in the alleged probable violations and recommended that Transco be preliminarily assessed a penalty of \$1,600,000. The Notice also proposes a Compliance Order addressing items 1-5 referenced above.

Transco has 30 days within receipt of the Notice to contest the allegations.

[A copy of the Notice can be downloaded here.](#)