



Walter Wright, Jr.
wwright@mwlaw.com
(501) 688.8839

Transportation/Hazardous Materials: U.S. Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration Interpretive Letter Addressing 48-hour Forwarding Rule

08/12/2026

The United States Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration ("PHMSA") addressed in a June 11th Interpretive Letter the application of the federal Hazardous Materials Regulations ("HMR") to the 48-hour forwarding rule. See Reference No. 25-0134.

PHMSA was responding to an October 24, 2025, email from Genesee & Wyoming Railroad Services, Inc. ("GW").

GW asked if a railroad is in violation of § 174.14 if it receives placarded residue/empty railcars and stores them on non-private track.

PHMSA responds in the negative, noting that under § 174.14(a), a carrier must forward each shipment of hazardous materials promptly and within 48 hours after acceptance, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. Nevertheless, PHMSA notes that the original intent of the 48-hour rule was to prevent shippers from sending out loaded tank cars without a billed destination and to reduce the time in transit for loaded hazardous materials rail cars. It further notes:

... As established in a prior Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) interpretation, § 174.14(a) does not apply to intermodal transfer operations, highway shipments, or residue quantities.

PHMSA states that because the 48-hour forwarding requirement does not cover residue quantities, your railroad would not be in violation of § 174.14 when storing the described placarded residue railcars on non-private track.

A copy of the interpretive letter can be found [here](#).