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Comment Period Opens for Proposed Rule Expanding Regulation of Gathering, Transmission Natural Gas Lines

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On April 8, the **Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA)** formally published its Notice of Proposed Rulemaking expanding regulation of natural gas transmission and gathering lines, including previously unregulated lines. Publication of the proposed rule in the Federal Register has triggered a 60-day comment period. Persons interested in submitting written comments on the proposed rule must do so by June 7, 2016.

The proposed rule would substantially increase the scope and strength of PHMSA's regulation of natural gas pipelines, including: (1) regulating pipelines constructed before 1970, (2) enhancing integrity management requirements, and (3) classifying lines as gathering lines earlier in the production process, thereby reducing the instances when lines will be considered incidental gathering, instead of transmission. For more details on the proposed rule and its implications for pipeline owners and operators, please see our prior pipeline alert.

PHMSA has specifically requested comments from industry participants on the rule's potential cost impact and whether its proposed regulations strike the most efficient balance between safety and feasibility. Now that the comment period has begun, interested parties should consider beginning their analysis of the proposed rule.

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