

Draft DOT report on pipeline fitness for service

McAfee & Taft RegLINC - July 2011

By **Chris Paul**

A Department of Transportation report titled *The State of the National Pipeline Infrastructure: A Preliminary Report* said that of the 2.5 million miles of pipeline nationwide, only a small, unspecified percentage is unfit for service because of the material the pipeline was made of and the way it was joined and installed. The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) reported that “just because one pipeline is older than another does not necessarily mean that it has a higher likelihood of leaking or rupturing.” Instead, the agency said that pipelines that are most vulnerable are those made of problematic materials using outdated construction practices. DOT said that smaller cast iron pipes are particularly susceptible to stresses from underground disturbances such as ground settlement, freeze-thaw cycles, undermining due to soil erosion or nearby excavation activities, and that copper service lines installed during the 1970s have been found to be most vulnerable to corrosion. PHMSA pointed out that pipes built using certain out-of-favor welding techniques have been problematic as well.



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