

PHMSA Guidance to State Partners Regarding COVID-19¹

March 19, 2020

The work PHMSA and its State partners accomplish, especially through inspections and investigations, is critical to the safety of the transportation and energy supply networks and the economic stability of our Nation.

PHMSA and its State partners will continue to execute their safety oversight mission during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak and intend to prioritize safety-sensitive inspections and investigations.

PHMSA will work with industry and State partners to address any emergent need for special permits or State waivers and, if appropriate, reschedule some inspections as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Recommended Actions for State Partners:

- States should identify critical work, such as priority and time-sensitive inspections and investigations, that should not be delayed and prioritize that work for completion.
- States should monitor the need for special permits, State waivers, and stays of enforcement. States should follow the guidance in PHMSA's Notice of Enforcement Discretion, as circumstances warrant.
- Where operators have instituted no- or limited-travel policies for their employees, States should determine whether to expedite the current work, conduct it remotely, or temporarily postpone it.
- States should follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance and best practices to minimize COVID-19 exposure to employees, their families, the public, and the regulated community.

PHMSA Planned Actions for its State Programs:

- PHMSA will conduct State Program Evaluations remotely, as much as possible.
- PHMSA will reschedule field observations of State inspections when circumstances permit.
- If State program managers or inspectors cannot meet training requirements, due to the cancellation of PHMSA Training and Qualification (TQ) classes, PHMSA will not deduct points from the respective State's Program Evaluation.
- PHMSA TQ will keep States abreast of cancelled classes.
- Grant Reviews will be conducted remotely to the extent possible.
- State Damage Prevention (SDP) Enforcement Effectiveness reviews will be conducted remotely.
- Scoring of the One-Call and SDP Grants will be done remotely.
- If National Association of Pipeline Safety Representatives meetings are cancelled or a State program manager cannot attend the meeting due to travel restrictions, PHMSA will not deduct points from the respective State's Program Evaluation.

¹ The contents of this guidance document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This guidance document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.

- If inspection goals cannot be met, please document the reasons why inspections were cancelled and could not be rescheduled. PHMSA will consider this documentation in its evaluation of State programs.