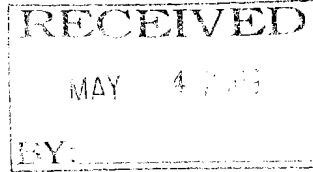




**ConocoPhillips  
Pipe Line Company**

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April 30, 2009

Rod Seeley Director, Southwest Region  
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration  
8701 S. Gessner  
Suite 1110  
Houston, Texas 77074

RE: CPF No. 4-2009-5006

Dear Mr. Seeley:

This letter is in response to your letter dated March 30, 2009 regarding the Notice of Probable Violation (NOPV) and Proposed Civil Penalty, received by ConocoPhillips Pipe Line Company (CPPL) on April 2, 2009.

**1. §195.402 Procedural manual for operations, maintenance, and emergencies.**

**a) General. Each operator shall prepare and follow for each pipeline system a manual of written procedures for conducting normal operations and maintenance activities and handling abnormal operations and emergencies. This manual shall be reviewed at intervals not exceeding 15 months, but at least once each calendar year, and appropriate changes made as necessary to insure that the manual is effective. This manual shall be prepared before initial operations of a pipeline commence, and appropriate parts shall be kept at locations where operations and maintenance activities are conducted.**

**(e) Emergencies. The manual required by paragraph (a) of this section must include procedures for the following to provide safety when an emergency condition occurs;**

**(4) Taking necessary action, such as emergency shutdown or pressure reduction, to minimize the volume of hazardous liquid or carbon dioxide that is released from any section of a pipeline in the event of a failure.**

### **PHMSA's Response:**

ConocoPhillips Pipeline Company (CPPL) Control Room Controller did not follow written procedures in response to potential leak indications, as reported by the WA line's SCADA system. On January 8, 2008, CPPL experienced an accident on its WA line that ultimately resulted in the release of 31,322 barrels of crude oil near Denver City, Texas. The physical cause of the event was a line leak followed by a rupture. The leak and rupture were determined (via metallurgical analysis) as a result of pressure cycle fatigue of the horizontal weld seam originating in a crack feature which propagated to a line failure. A post-accident review of the gain/loss information indicated the seam actually leaked for over 24 hours before it ruptured on January 8, 2008. DATA showed line losses of approximately 1500 barrels for the 36 hour period preceding the rupture. The pattern of line losses was consistent with a leak.

CPPL's procedures require controllers to track hourly gains and losses, as well as calculate cumulative gains and losses. SCADA indicated fluctuations showing both short-term gains and losses, but over time the cumulative losses began to rise. The increase in cumulative losses was recognized by the Control Center as an indication of a leak. This type of loss is a leak "indication" as identified within CPPL's Control Room Operations Manual. The Controller did not adequately follow procedures associated with the gain and loss calculations. Additionally, a Senior Controller discussed the line pressure problems with the Controller, but the Senior Controller did not independently and thoroughly analyze the operation, SCADA data, and Controller's actions to be sure if the Controller had correctly assessed the situation. Had the leak been properly identified, appropriate responsive action could have been taken in the Control Center to potentially avoid the rupture and lessen the severity of the release.

CPPL's Controller also did not properly diagnose the line pressure loss and rupture on the WA line. The Controller misinterpreted the pressure loss as a result of the shut down of the Weems Booster Station due to high pump vibration. The Controller did not associate the loss with a rupture situation and attempted to re-pack the line over a 5 hour period, greatly contributing to the magnitude of the release. Other information (line pressure readings, pump shutdowns, system loss volumes and alarm data) available to the Controller at the time of the incident were all indications of a potential leak.

Based upon these conditions and indicators, the controller was required to investigate the pressure and flow deviations according to CPPL's Operations Manual for their Ponca City Control Center (specifically AOC-0002). AOC-0002 describes specific "Indications" that the Controller was required to recognize as a potential leak and further prescribes specific "Responses" to perform based upon the indications. The Controller failed to respond to the potential leak indications as reported by the Supervisory Control Data Accusation (SCADA) system.

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**CPPL's Response:**

CPPL will not contest the violation alleged in the NOPV. Notwithstanding this decision by CPPL, CPPL does not admit to any liability concerning this matter or admit to any violation alleged in the NOPV.

CPPL requests that PHMSA reduce the proposed civil penalty of \$200,000. As stated in CPPL's responses to the Corrective Action Order (CPF No. 4-2008-5002H) and other actions taken by CPPL which have been previously shared with PHMSA, CPPL has taken significant steps to address the concerns addressed in this NOPV and remediate this situation. The culmination of these activities warrants a mitigation of the civil penalty.

Upon receipt of the Final Order, CPPL will comply with the same including the payment of such civil penalty.

Please let me know if you have any questions or comments regarding this matter.

Sincerely,



Todd Tullio  
Manager, Regulatory Compliance

CC. David Eng/PHMSA  
Mark Drumm/CPPL  
Van Williams/CPPL  
Dennis Close/CPPL