

NORTHWEST INDUSTRIAL GAS USERS

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Submitted via Electronic Filing to Records@wutc.wa.gov

Ms. Carole J. Washburn
Secretary
Washington Utilities & Transportation Commission
1300 South Evergreen Park Drive SW
P.O. Box 47250
Olympia, Washington 98504-7250

Re: Comments of Northwest Industrial Gas Users on Draft Rules
Amending 480-93 WAC, Gas Companies – Safety, Docket No.
PG-0061027

Dear Ms. Washburn:

In response to the Commission's Notice of Opportunity to File Written Comments in the above-captioned proceeding, the Northwest Industrial Gas Users (NWIGU) submits this letter as its initial comments and requests that the staff initiate a stakeholder meeting as the next step in this process. NWIGU is a non-profit association comprised of thirty-two industrial users of natural gas with major facilities in the states of Washington, Oregon and Idaho. Some NWIGU members own gas facilities that directly connect their plants in Washington to the Williams' Northwest interstate pipeline. These operators' intrastate gas pipelines are accordingly subject to safety regulation by the WUTC. In addition for those NWIGU members who take service behind the utilities, industrial customers are also impacted in scope and cost by any changes in the Commission's safety regulation of local distribution company service.

NWIGU accordingly requests that you include it on the distribution list for service in this docket as follows:

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NWIGU undertook its review of the proposed rules in this proceeding with the understanding that the changes were to be minor, straight-forward and more in the nature of clarification to the recently revised gas safety rules. In reviewing the proposed changes, NWIGU is concerned, however, that some proposed revisions may be broader. NWIGU would request the opportunity for future comment when the scope of all revisions is more fully defined.

At this time, NWIGU has the following specific concerns:

1. WAC 480-93-005 (22) – NWIGU is uncertain what the proposed new definition for operator records is intended to include given the corresponding revision to WAC 480-93-018 (1) (which revision requires an operator to maintain records sufficient to demonstrate compliance with both federal and state pipeline safety regulation).

2. WAC 480-93-015 (4) – Is this provision intended to add requirements above the existing Operator Qualification requirements (192 Subpart N?) Its insertion appears duplicative of existing requirements, and accordingly unnecessary.

3. WAC 480-93-018 (3) - NWIGU has concern with a requirement that records must be “easy” to review and inspect as it suggests a most subjective standard. This rule would seem more appropriately worded if it required records to be “readily” accessible.

4. WAC 480-93-018 (5) seems to suggest something specific beyond the compliance requirement of 480-93-018 (1). The new rule change also requires actual physical signature, and this seems counterproductive to any efficiencies for record retention and storage in electronic media.

5. WAC 480-93-100 Valves: NWIGU understands from its own preliminary discussions with the local distribution companies (LDCs) that the costs of compliance for the LDCs with the written program requirement changes appear quite significant, coupled with the risk analysis/valve inspection requirement of subsection 5.

6. WAC 480-93-124 – The proposed revisions are not entirely clear. Do all above ground pipelines and pipeline facilities, except meter set assemblies, require a pipeline marker? Both sides of a drainage ditch no matter how wide? New subsection f is difficult for accountability for the operator with the best of intentions (a marker required where there is “unusual activity” is just too vague). NWIGU members that are direct connects adhere to the Commission’s

requirements for their regulated facilities, but recommend this subsection f be deleted.

7. WAC 480-93-170 (1) requires two business days notice with a review of three business days for the pressure test procedures now added in new subsection d. It would seem more appropriate to require two business days in new subsection d by meshing the notice and procedures review.

8. WAC 480-93-180 (2) NWIGU views the new proposed requirement for an operator to transmit all manual revisions to the WUTC “as soon as practical” to be most burdensome. A requirement to file revisions on at least an annual basis would be much more reasonable.

9. WAC 480-93-180 (3) NWIGU does not think a record listing requirement belongs in an operator’s manual for operations and maintenance and recommends striking this addition.

10. WAC 480-93-180 (4) NWIGU is concerned with what level of detail is required by a manual written “for a person with adequate training” as this seems vague and question whether this provision is needed.

11. WAC 480-93-XXX NWIGU suggests that the new Damage prevention provisions be discussed at a stakeholders’ workshop as the changes appear significant.

NWIGU appreciates the opportunity to submit comments in this rulemaking and would appreciate an opportunity for further stakeholder discussion with a workshop. It would also be helpful to have a better understanding of the intent and purpose of desired changes from the Staff in conjunction with the proposed rules going forward.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

Paula E. Pyron
Executive Director
Northwest Industrial Gas Users

cc E. Finklea
C. Stokes

