



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Pipeline and Hazardous  
Materials Safety  
Administration**

Administrator

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

May 28, 2021

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy:

The House requested (House Report 116-452) that the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) provide a report on PHMSA's Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 staffing and hiring plans and actual turnover and hiring in FY 2020 for the Office of Pipeline Safety. This is required within 120 days after enactment of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Public Law 116-260). I have enclosed PHMSA's report that meets this requirement.

PHMSA continues to work towards its full employment goal of 308 Pipeline Safety personnel. Pipeline Safety inspectors typically are engineers, who are difficult to recruit and retain, as there is a high demand for this skill set in the regulated industry. As a result of aggressive hiring strategies implemented in FY 2020, the Office of Pipeline Safety had 305 (99 percent) of its positions filled as of September 30, 2020. In total, PHMSA gained a net of 17 pipeline safety employees (42 hires less 25 separations) and the turnover rate decreased from 11.4 percent in FY 2019 to 8 percent in FY 2020. In FY 2021, PHMSA continues to implement hiring solutions, such as special pay rates, recruitment and retention bonuses, tuition assistance, and student loan repayment. PHMSA will continue to use innovative hiring and retention strategies as detailed in the report.

A similar response has been sent to the Vice Chairman of the Senate Committee on Appropriations; the Chairwoman and Ranking Member of the House Committee on Appropriations; the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies; and the Chairman and

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy

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Ranking Member of the House Subcommittee on Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies.

Should you require any further information or assistance, please feel free to call me or have your staff contact Patricia Klinger, Deputy Director of the Office of Governmental, International and Public Affairs, by phone at 202-366-6374 or by e-mail at [Patricia.Klinger@dot.gov](mailto:Patricia.Klinger@dot.gov).

I hope this information is helpful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tristan H. Brown". The signature is written in black ink and has a fluid, connected style.

Tristan H. Brown  
Acting Administrator

Enclosure



U.S. Department  
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1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
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May 28, 2021

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Vice Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Vice Chairman Shelby:

The House requested (House Report 116-452) that the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) provide a report on PHMSA's Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 staffing and hiring plans and actual turnover and hiring in FY 2020 for the Office of Pipeline Safety. This is required within 120 days after enactment of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Public Law 116-260). I have enclosed PHMSA's report that meets this requirement.

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House Subcommittee on Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies.

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May 28, 2021

The Honorable Brian Schatz  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Transportation,  
Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Schatz:

The House requested (House Report 116-452) that the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) provide a report on PHMSA's Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 staffing and hiring plans and actual turnover and hiring in FY 2020 for the Office of Pipeline Safety. This is required within 120 days after enactment of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Public Law 116-260). I have enclosed PHMSA's report that meets this requirement.

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May 28, 2021

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Transportation,  
Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Ranking Member Collins:

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1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

May 28, 2021

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro:

The House requested (House Report 116-452) that the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) provide a report on PHMSA's Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 staffing and hiring plans and actual turnover and hiring in FY 2020 for the Office of Pipeline Safety. This is required within 120 days after enactment of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Public Law 116-260). I have enclosed PHMSA's report that meets this requirement.

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1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

May 28, 2021

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Granger:

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The Honorable Kay Granger

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Tristan H. Brown  
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1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
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May 28, 2021

The Honorable David E. Price  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Transportation,  
and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Price:

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May 28, 2021

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Transportation,  
and Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Diaz-Balart:

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The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart

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**Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA)  
Report to Congress on the Office of Pipeline Safety  
FY 2020 Hiring Actuals and FY 2021 Hiring Plan**

**FY 2020 Hiring and Turnover**

In FY 2020, the Office of Pipeline Safety onboard staff increased from 288 full-time personnel on October 1, 2019, to 305 full-time personnel on September 30, 2020. PHMSA hired 42 Pipeline Safety employees. Of these 42 hires, 23 were inspectors, and 19 were other safety staff. In the same period, 25 employees left the Office of Pipeline Safety, resulting in a net increase of 17 employees. The turnover rate was 8 percent, using an average number of 305 employees.

**FY 2020 Pipeline Safety Hiring and Turnover**

<b>Onboard October 1, 2019<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Hiring FY 2020</b>	<b>Separations FY 2020</b>	<b>Onboard September 30, 2020</b>	<b>Turnover Rate FY 2020<sup>2</sup></b>
288	42	(25)	305	8%

1/ The Onboard October 1, 2019 count of 288 reflects an adjustment to correct the number of employees onboard at the start of the year.

2/ Turnover calculated using the number of separations divided by the average number of Pipeline Safety employees onboard of 305 in FY 2020.

**Pipeline Safety Hiring Plan**

In FY 2021, PHMSA’s Office of Pipeline Safety received funding for the requested 308 Pipeline Safety positions. As of September 30, 2020, the Office of Pipeline Safety had 305 (99 percent) of its positions filled. Of the 305 persons onboard, 157 were inspectors; of the 3 vacancies, none were inspector positions. PHMSA experienced an 8 percent turnover rate in FY 2020, down from 11 percent in FY 2019. In FY 2020, PHMSA hired 17 more people than it separated (42 hired, 25 separated). PHMSA benefited from larger applicant pools for its job announcements and fewer people leaving PHMSA than in the prior year. While the industry remains robust—with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projecting that the employment rate for mechanical engineers will go up by 9 percent by 2026—PHMSA expects that its hiring plan, the addition of hiring and retention incentives, and the impacts of COVID will continue to reduce turnover and accelerate the filling of vacancies when turnover occurs.

On December 28, 2020, the Protecting our Infrastructure of Pipelines and Enhancing Safety Act of 2020 (PIPES Act) became law. This Act recognized the importance of hiring and retaining the best and brightest inspectors. The Act supports PHMSA’s pipeline safety work by increasing the minimum number of agency inspection and enforcement personnel, as well as directing the agency to hire additional subject matter experts to support its rulemaking activities. To address the agency’s difficulty in recruiting and retaining its workforce, the Act directs the Secretary to use incentives, including special pay rates, repayment of student loans, tuition assistance, and bonuses, coupled with continued service agreements, to better attract and sustain a qualified, dedicated workforce.

PHMSA had previously begun to implement these strategies following a comprehensive workforce planning effort in 2019, which evaluated the current workforce at a strategic level to determine future hiring and placement needs and inform human capital initiatives, such as the PHMSA hiring strategies, over the subsequent three years.

PHMSA will implement and/or continue the following strategies in FY 2021:

- Request Direct-Hire Authority (DHA) in accordance with Public Law No: 114-183, PIPES Act 2016, Section 9 Workforce Management, subsection (b) Direct Hiring, which states that PHMSA may apply to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) for the authority to appoint qualified candidates to any position relating to pipeline safety.
- Continue using the current Direct Hiring Authority for pipeline safety positions that qualify as science, technology, engineering, and math positions until the new request has been approved by OPM. This hiring authority is made available through OPM guidance (October 2018).
- Offer mission-critical positions special pay rates, repayment of student loans, tuition assistance, and bonuses, coupled with continued service agreements.
- Invest in science, technology, engineering, and math education programs, promoting pipeline safety engineering positions.
- Leverage existing Federal STEM education programs (e.g., the Department of Defense SMART program) to generate qualified candidates for PHMSA positions in the engineering field.
- Review PHMSA Mission Critical Occupations and develop targeted hiring strategies for each.
- Continue participation in events, such as the Virtual Career Fairs at National HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and Universities), and conduct outreach to Affinity Groups, such as: The Society of Women Engineers (SWE); The Society of Asian Scientists and Engineers (SASE); The National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE); and The American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES). These efforts will improve the agency's visibility among qualified engineering position candidates.
- Improve succession planning for pipeline engineers, subject matter experts, and other key leadership positions, including through the PHMSA Advanced Leadership Development Program.
- Use Recruitment, Relocation, and Retention Incentives to attract and retain talent in hard-to-fill positions, including pipeline safety engineering positions.

- Hire more entry-level pipeline engineers, use newly requested training and retention funding to develop highly qualified staff, and offer incentives to improve retention throughout employees' careers.
- Develop a student pipeline utilizing the Pathways Program, which offers federal internship and employment opportunities for current students, recent graduates, and those with an advanced degree.
- Expand the use of job fairs at colleges and universities with engineering programs to recruit pipeline engineers.