



New Report Exposes Federal Pipeline Oversight as ‘Reactive and Dangerous’

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ANN ARBOR, Mich. (May 5, 2026) – The Pipeline Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) has never shutdown a pipeline – permanently or temporarily – before it ruptures, no matter how severe of a risk or regardless of the devastations caused by ruptures, according to a new report of federal pipeline safety enforcement.

Prepared for the Great Lakes Business Network by the University of Michigan Environmental Law and Sustainability Clinic, this new analysis uses PHMSA’s own enforcement records to document that in the past 16 years:

- The nation has had 10,024 pipeline incidents, 4,596 of them significant,
- PHMSA has never shut down a pipeline permanently, before or after a rupture.
- The agency has never stopped a pipeline from operating even temporarily before a spill.

PHMSA has only undertaken 50 formal enforcement actions out of the thousands of pipeline spills during that 16-year period. “PHMSA’s own records show that it hardly ever takes action to stop a rupture– its entire enforcement posture toward pipeline safety is reactive and dangerous,” said David Weaver, author of the report. “Only 50 enforcement actions out of 10,000 plus incidents from the federal agency responsible for protecting the nation from oil spills—it is no wonder why there are hundreds of pipeline ruptures every year.”

This report comes as a federal court considers Enbridge’s bid to keep its aging and outdated Line 5 pipeline operational, while stripping states and Tribes of their authority to protect people and the environment from unnecessary risks. Instead, the company is relying on PHMSA.

Enbridge's Line 5 was built in 1953, and has experienced at least 35 spills totaling over 1.13 million gallons released. PHMSA has never ordered any shutdown of Line 5, temporary or permanent, even after damaging anchor strikes in the Straits of Mackinac [forced a judge to order Line 5's closure and inspection](#).

The Great Lakes Business Network is a coalition of businesses dedicated to preserving the integrity and vitality of the Great Lakes, fostering sustainable business practices, and advocating for policies that protect the environment and the economy of the Great Lakes region. It is co-managed by National Wildlife Federation and Groundwork for Resilient Communities. Learn more at glbusinessnetwork.com