

Senator Markey’s Pipeline Accountability, Safety, and Environmental Standards Act of 2024: One-Pager

Pipelines pose significant risks to public safety and the environment. Devastating accidents, such as the 2010 explosion in San Bruno, California, and the 2020 carbon dioxide pipeline rupture in Satartia, Mississippi, highlight the urgent need for more stringent safety measures, and greater public engagement. Pipeline leaks and ruptures also continue to cause environmental and climate harms. This bill addresses these concerns by updating safety standards, enhancing regulatory oversight, and promoting transparency. It also recognizes the necessity to transition away from fossil fuels, aligning with broader climate goals.

Key Provisions

1) Enhanced Safety and Environmental Standards:

The bill mandates that the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) consider climate impacts, the lifespan of fossil fuel infrastructure, and plans for transitioning to non-emitting alternatives when setting pipeline standards.

2) Streamlined Rulemaking:

By eliminating duplicative cost-benefit analysis requirements, the bill allows PHMSA to act more swiftly and effectively in protecting public health and safety.

3) Public Participation and Transparency:

The bill establishes an Office of Public Engagement within PHMSA, funded with \$12 million annually, enhancing the agency’s ability to educate and involve communities in pipeline safety discussions. The bill also requires more disclosure of critical safety information to the public by pipeline operators and ensures that more safety incidents will be disclosed.

4) Safety Upgrades and Regulations:

The bill requires the application of updated safety standards to existing pipelines and mandates that pipelines can be shut off within 30 minutes in the event of catastrophic failures. It also directs the development of robust safety regulations for CO2 pipelines, which present unique hazards, and calls for an independent study on the safety of blending hydrogen into natural gas systems.

5) Modernization and Funding:

Extending and modifying the Natural Gas Distribution Infrastructure Safety and Modernization Grant Program, the bill ensures continued investment in pipeline safety and modernization, with a significant portion allocated to non-emitting alternatives.

6) Accountability Measures:

The bill removes limits on civil penalties for a related series of violations and allows private citizens to take legal action against PHMSA for failing to enforce safety standards, closing existing regulatory gaps and enhancing accountability.