



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

March 14, 2012

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Stakeholder:

The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration's (PHMSA's) Hazardous Materials Automated Cargo Communication for Efficient and Safe Shipments (HM-ACCESS) initiative, established in 2008, strives to identify and eliminate barriers to the use of paperless hazard communication technologies to improve the delivery of critical hazardous materials (HM) safety information throughout the transportation chain.

In 2009, PHMSA's Office of Hazardous Materials Safety (OHMS) held a public meeting to discuss the purpose and objective of the HM-ACCESS initiative. In addition, the following recent National Academy of Science's reports examined better approaches to communicate HM information to emergency responders during transportation:

- Transportation Research Board (TRB) Hazardous Materials Cooperative Research Program (HMCRP) Report 4: Emerging Technologies Applicable to Hazardous Materials Transportation Safety and Security, released in June 2011; and
- TRB HMCRP Report 5: Evaluation of the Use of Electronic Shipping Papers for Hazardous Materials Shipments, expected to be completed in 2012.

OHMS recognizes efforts and advancements within the HM community to incorporate paperless systems. This memorandum serves as a notice to stakeholders that OHMS has reinitiated HM-ACCESS with assistance from the Department of Transportation's Volpe National Transportation Systems Center. OHMS will explore approaches to define transportation system requirements necessary to allow HM communication using electronic transfer of information. The HM-ACCESS research initiative will examine existing and theoretical technological approaches to address the needs of stakeholders for electronic HM (e-HM) communication.

To better understand the current operational needs and HM communication systems, OHMS will seek input and information through a series of meetings with stakeholders representing emergency response, law enforcement, hazardous materials shippers, and modal carriers. Following these meetings OHMS will schedule a public meeting, the date for which will be posted on PHMSA's HM-ACCESS website (<http://hazmat.dot.gov/HM-ACCESS/index.html>). Stakeholder input and information will be essential in OHMS's efforts to:

- Validate the transportation system requirements necessary to demonstrate the feasibility and functionality of implementing e-HM communication;
- Determine the regulatory performance requirements needed to ensure an e-HM communication system provides a level of safety at least equivalent to the current paper-based communication process; and
- Identify a transportation system platform on which to test/validate the facilitation of e-HM communication, supplementing existing HM communication requirements.

The HM-ACCESS research initiative *will not replace* existing HM shipping paper requirements or HM communication requirements. The intent of this research initiative is to identify and evaluate options to complement or add to existing regulatory systems and technologies for HM shipping papers.

OHMS will communicate its actions and progress through various outreach efforts and the HM-ACCESS webpage (<http://hazmat.dot.gov/HM-ACCESS/index.html>). The PHMSA HM-ACCESS point of contact is James O. Simmons, Acting Chief of Research and Development and questions regarding the HM-ACCESS initiative may be sent to HMACCESS@dot.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. El-Sibaie', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Magdy El-Sibaie
Associate Administrator for
Hazardous Materials Safety