

Tristan Brown, Acting Administrator  
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Administration  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

via email [t.brown@dot.gov](mailto:t.brown@dot.gov)

Feb 5, 2024

Dear Administrator Brown:

We are writing to express our concerns regarding the recent announcement by Enbridge Inc. that they will lay off 650 employees by March 1, 2024.

Enbridge's operations significantly impact the safety and efficiency of oil pipeline maintenance and monitoring. While Enbridge has stated that these layoffs will not affect the safety of its operations, we are concerned about the potential implications of this workforce reduction on the maintenance and monitoring of their oil pipelines. The reduction of staff, particularly if it involves personnel directly responsible for pipeline safety and integrity, could potentially lead to decreased oversight and increased risk of incidents. This is happening at the same time that Enbridge is seeking to have pipeline safety and integrity [oversight reduced in a federal court Consent Decree](#) implemented following Enbridge's disastrous negligence resulting in a massive oil pipeline rupture along the Kalamazoo River in Michigan in 2010.

Any compromise in the safety and integrity of these pipelines due to workforce reductions could have significant consequences for the entire Great Lakes region, Native American communities in Michigan and Wisconsin and the environment. The potential reduction in court protections, coupled with significant layoffs, could potentially compromise the safety and integrity of the pipeline. This is especially concerning given the history of documented oil spills resulting from failures of Enbridge oil pipelines and deterioration of Line 5 segments on the Bad River Band reservation and in the Straits of Mackinac.

We are requesting an urgent inquiry into the impact of these layoffs on the safety and integrity of Enbridge pipelines. It is crucial to understand how these changes might affect the ability of the remaining staff to maintain the Line 5 pipeline to the highest safety standards. We also urge the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) to closely monitor Enbridge's actions during this period of layoffs to ensure that safety standards are upheld. We believe PHMSA should offer a public report as assurance to stakeholders around these pipelines that PHMSA has conducted a thorough review.

There is no such thing as a safe 70-year-old pipeline in the Great Lakes, along the northern shore of Lake Michigan, or in the Lake Superior watershed in Wisconsin. It is crucial, however, that the company maintains adequate staffing levels to ensure the safest possible operation and maintenance of its pipelines. We also request that PHMSA conduct a thorough review of Enbridge's safety protocols and contingency plans in light of these layoffs and the proposed reduction in oversight by the federal court.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Sean McBrearty  
Oil & Water Don't Mix

Paula Bowman and Denise Hartsough  
Co-Presidents, League of Women Voters of Michigan