

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2309

July 29, 2010

Cynthia L. Quarterman
Administrator, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
East Building, 2nd Floor
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Ms. Quarterman,

I'm writing to express my deep concern about the oil pipeline rupture that occurred on July 26, 2010 near Battle Creek, MI. Early estimates indicate that over 800,000 gallons of oil have spilled into the Kalamazoo River, a major waterway that feeds into the Great Lakes. The oil has had a devastating impact on the community and ecosystems in and along the Kalamazoo River. Should it reach the Great Lakes, the impacts could be catastrophic. It is critical that Enbridge Energy Associates, the operator of the pipeline, be held fully responsible for all damages associated with the spill. I urge the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) to conduct a full investigation of this spill to identify the cause of the rupture, investigate Enbridge's safety record, and take strong steps to prevent similar catastrophes from happening in the future.

As you undoubtedly know, Enbridge Energy Associates has a history of accidents that call into question both the company's attention to pipeline safety and the effectiveness of federal oversight and enforcement of pipeline safety regulations. Minnesota has been directly impacted by the company's poor safety record. In 2007, a major explosion on an Enbridge pipeline near Clearbook, Minnesota killed two workers and caused serious damage to sensitive wetlands.

The 2007 Minnesota explosion and the recent incident in Michigan indicate neglect on the part of Enbridge Energy Associates and a lack of adequate regulation of oil and gas pipeline safety by the PHMSA. I urge you to take the strongest actions possible to hold Enbridge accountable for this spill. Additionally, I would like information on the nature, frequency, and efficacy of the PHMSA safety regulatory requirements for all oil and gas pipelines running through Minnesota. Like the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, we must ensure that the operating company is held fully responsible for damages and that the federal regulatory agency is effectively doing its job.

I appreciate your prompt consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Al Franken
United States Senator