

## DECISION MEMORANDUM

**TO: COMMISSIONER KJELLANDER  
COMMISSIONER SMITH  
COMMISSIONER HANSEN  
COMMISSION SECRETARY  
COMMISSION STAFF**

**FROM: DON HOWELL**

**DATE: OCTOBER 24, 2003**

**RE: AVISTA UTILITIES' REQUEST FOR A WAIVER FROM THE  
COMMISSION'S SAFETY RULE 201, CASE NO. AVU-P-03-1**

On October 14, 2003, Avista Utilities filed a letter requesting a waiver from the Commission's Safety Rule 201, IDAPA 31.11.01.201. Safety Rule 201 requires all gas corporations to abide by federal safety regulations contained in the Code of Federal Regulations, including 49 C.F.R. § 192.321(a). The U.S. Department of Transportation's safety standards in Section 192.321(a) require that plastic pipe used to transport natural gas "must be installed below ground level." Avista seeks a waiver to encase the plastic pipe above ground where it crosses the river.

The Commission's Safety Rule 3 provides that any person requesting a waiver from any safety rule may seek a waiver from the Commission. IDAPA 31.11.01.003. A waiver request must describe the specific waiver sought; refer to the particular rule or order that is controlling; and state the facts to support the waiver request. IDAPA 31.01.01.053.

### THE WAIVER REQUEST

Avista requests a waiver so that it may place a 6-inch plastic pipe above ground in a steel casing. The Company proposes to place the plastic pipe in a 10-inch steel casing where the main gas line crosses the South Fork of the Palouse River on U.S. Highway 95 in Moscow, Idaho. The Company proposes that the plastic pipe (encased in the steel casing) be suspended from the concrete bridge as it spans the river for a distance of 67 feet. To further protect the casing and plastic pipe from direct sunlight, the casing will be suspended under the bridge, thus shielding it from direct sunlight. At the ends of the bridge, the plastic pipe will emerge from the steel encasement and will be buried below ground level.

### STAFF COMMENTS

Staff believes that a waiver in this instance is warranted. The Company provided calculations to the Staff showing that 10-inch roller hangers with adequate capacity would be installed at 9.1 feet spacing along with the necessary hardware of adequate capacity. The Company has assured Staff that prior to installing the plastic pipe in the casing, cleaning pigs will be run through the casing to remove debris, which might damage the plastic pipe. The Company indicates that in this location the pipe will be protected from ice and wind loads.

There are advantages to the use of encased plastic pipe at this bridge crossing. First, plastic pipe is not prone to corrosion, and therefore will require less maintenance than steel pipe. Second, steel encased plastic pipe is less acceptable to damage from vandalism, airborne objects and external loading. Finally, Staff notes that many similar waivers have been granted by the various states and approved by the U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Pipeline Safety.

### COMMISSION DECISION

Given the specific facts of this case, does the Commission believe that a waiver from 49 C.F.R. § 192.321(a) is warranted?



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Don Howell

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