

# Recommended Practice for Pipeline Operator Qualification (OQ)

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## **Introduction**

### **Background**

The original purpose of API 1161 was to provide Liquid Pipeline Operators (“Operators”) with a guidance document to aid in the development of a written Operator Qualification (OQ) program to comply with the new OQ regulation (49 CFR Part 195 Subpart G) which became effective October 26, 1999. At that time, the preamble to the final regulation was the only guidance available to assist Operators with program development and program compliance. Since then, the regulation has been revised; Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) has issued advisories, white papers, frequently asked questions (FAQs), protocols and other guidance documents; industry groups have formed and some have issued OQ standards; and Operators have gained compliance experience as their programs have matured. Therefore, it is the goal of the OQ workgroup to revise API 1161 to reflect the relevant additional information that was not available in 2000.

### **Program Requirements**

Each Operator is required to have and follow a written OQ program that includes provisions to address the nine required elements of the OQ regulation. While the Operator has the flexibility to exceed the requirements of the regulation, it is important to note that any and all requirements included in the written program become enforceable.

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# Recommended Practice for Pipeline Operator Qualification

## 1 Scope

The purpose of this recommended practice is to provide guidance for developing and maintaining a compliant Operator Qualification (OQ) program. Operators may choose to use all, part or none of this document. Additionally, many components of this recommended practice also apply to Gas Transmission Lines regulated under 49 *CFR* 195. Therefore, Operators may choose to utilize the recommended practice as applicable for these lines.

Operators should be aware that the OQ regulation is applicable only to United States Department of Transportation (DOT) jurisdictional pipelines. For purposes of this document, the word “pipeline” is used interchangeably with pipeline, pipeline facility and pipeline system and any and all jurisdictional pipeline components as defined in 49 *CFR* Part 195.

This document is written to provide guidance for achieving compliance with the regulation at the time of publication and is comprised of three individual components: the Guidance Document, the API Covered Task List (Annex A), and the Covered Task Standards (Annex B). A separate publication, the API Covered Task Standards, will contain guidance on the individual Covered Tasks. This guidance will include knowledge and skill components, span of control and abnormal operating conditions.

## 2 Abbreviations

For the purposes of this document, the following abbreviations apply.

AOC	abnormal operating conditions
API	American Petroleum Institute
CFR	<i>Code of Federal Regulations</i>
DOT	Department of Transportation
FAQ	frequently asked question
HQ	headquarters
NDT	nondestructive testing
OPID	Operator identification
OPS	Office of Pipeline Safety
OQ	Operator Qualification
PHMSA	Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration

## 3 Guidance for Developing a Written Program

### 3.1 Roles and Responsibilities

Operators should define roles and responsibilities for the administration, management, and consistent implementation of the OQ program. Clear responsibilities for implementing the elements of the OQ program should be established and communicated to affected individuals. Responsibilities associated with the OQ program may include but are not limited to the following:

- central management and oversight of the OQ program;
- training, as appropriate;
- conducting and administering evaluations;