

## **Special Permits for the Transportation of Bulk Materials Used for Blasting A Model of Efficiency in Government**

The special permits (SP) program administered by the US Department of Transportation's (DOT) Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) is vital to the transportation of bulk Division 1.5 and 5.1 materials used for blasting and ensures that less sensitive, safer materials are transported on highways. Over 6 billion pounds of bulk materials are used annually for blasting and underpin our industrial economy by providing raw materials for manufacturing, infrastructure development and construction.



A management advisory issued by the DOT Office of Inspector General to PHMSA has called the safety of multipurpose bulk trucks (MBT) like those shown above into question.<sup>1</sup> The premise for the advisory is flawed. The facts about the explosives industry's use and safety record with these trucks follows:

In the last 50 years, technology has transitioned from packaged products like dynamite to much safer ammonium nitrate-based products in bulk form. Safety, security and productivity are all maximized through the use of bulk materials.

PHMSA has shown remarkable ability to maintain the modifications to the SPs necessary to keep the technology advancing while at the same time improving transportation safety. These technological advancements carry over to improve safety in manufacturing, storage and use.

The industry is one of the most proactive safety advocates in the US and consistently places in the top 50 percent of pro-rated safety metrics.

To our knowledge, there has never been an accidental explosion of bulk materials for blasting in transportation, nor has there been a fatality or injury from the transportation of commercial explosives or precursors by MBT.

Although remote, the possibility of an explosion can never be eliminated. MBTs provide the materials necessary for mining and construction in the safest manner possible. Transportation risks are minimized by adhering to the most rigorous set of regulatory requirements of any hazardous material class, developing effective emergency response, and encouraging the transport of safer materials.

Other regulatory agencies have purview over MBT operations and do not have major concerns over the safety of these operations.

If PHMSA revoked the SPs for transportation of bulk materials for blasting, explosives manufacturers would not be able to meet consumer demands for the amounts of material needed to continue mining and construction at current rates.

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<sup>1</sup> Management Advisory from OIG to PHMSA, dated July 28, 2009.