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MCSA-1997-2350-0316

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Charles Johnson, Maintenance

November 1, 2000

**Docket Clerk, US DOT Dockets
Room PL-401
400 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, DC 20590-0001**

To Whom It May Concern:

Recently the U.S. Department of Transportation has proposed rules that cause me great concern for the safety of my fellow citizens. As the mayor of the City of Vidor, I am responsible for the safety of the approximately 11,000 residents in my community. And as drafted, the USDOT rules would restrict the hours that utility company service drivers can operate during an emergency.

I believe utility workers should get the same exemptions the department proposes for police and firefighters. In our town, utility workers are a vital key to meeting the needs of our emergency services. The men and women of our power company protect our homes from power outages, keep our children safe when an accident downs power lines and allows the fire department to quickly contain and control fires.

Several years ago when a devastating ice storm struck southeast Texas, more than half of our citizens lost power and were in danger of suffering from extreme cold and financial losses. This emergency truly endangered the lives of children, the elderly and the sick. It was the utility employees that worked day and night to restore the power and heat our homes. To restrict the hours of operations for utilities is a grave mistake. I urge the USDOT to exempt utility workers as it exempts other necessary emergency personnel.

170 North Main Street
Vidor, Texas 77662

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Fax 1 409 769-8853
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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Hopkins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "H".

**Joe Hopkins
Mayor, City of Vidor**

**cc: Phil Gramm, U. S. Senator
Kay Bailey Hutchison, U. S. Senator
David Bernsen, State Senator
Jim Turner, U. S. Congressman
Ron Lewis, Representative**