

Judge orders Enbridge to halt Mich. pipeline operations

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The Mackinac Bridge spans Michigan's Straits of Mackinac, home to Enbridge Inc.'s Line 5. Doug Kerr/Flickr

A Michigan state judge today ordered Alberta-based Enbridge Inc. to temporarily halt operations across its entire Line 5 after the discovery of a dislodged anchor that has called into question the safety of the Great Lakes pipeline.

Ingham County Circuit Court Judge James Jamo determined that evidence provided by the company, allegedly showing how it was monitoring the pipeline's western leg, failed to justify keeping any portion of the system online after the discovery of the structural flaw in the eastern portion.

The judge granted the temporary restraining order in part fearing a spill could deal irreparable harm to the Great Lakes region.



[+] Enbridge's Line 5 pipeline. Enbridge

The risk from continued operations by Enbridge "if wrong in its conclusion that it can safely do so in spite of recent damage to Line 5 of unknown origin is so substantial and irreparable, and endangers so many communities and livelihoods and the natural resources of Michigan, the danger far exceeds the risk of financial loss to Defendants," Jamo wrote in his [order](#).

The western and eastern portions of the pipeline are ordered to remain shut down until at least a hearing Tuesday on Michigan's motion for preliminary injunction.

Michigan lawmakers over the past week have looked for any avenue to shutter the entire pipeline to allow time for a more thorough, independent investigation into its integrity.

Enbridge discovered last week an anchor support had shifted deep below the surface in the pipeline's crossing between lakes Michigan and Huron in the Straits of Mackinac.

The company says the issue didn't harm the pipeline's structural integrity, but officials closed a portion of the conduit to investigate further. The western part of the pipeline had remained operational to movement of crude oil and natural gas.

Enbridge did not return a request for comment this afternoon about the judge's order by publishing time.

Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel (D) filed the motion Monday for a temporary restraining order after alleging the company failed to provide the state with needed information on the pipeline's safety case ([Energywire](#), June 23).

"This ruling, while significant, is only a short-term fix," Nessel said in a statement. "If the lines are put back into operation, one mismanaged incident or accident would result in a historic catastrophe for our state. Work must continue toward complete removal of Line 5 from our waters."

Michigan's congressional delegation pressed the Department of Transportation to do more to intervene in the pipeline's investigation. In a letter to Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, the House Democrats urged the federal government to stop the pipeline from operating (*E&E News PM*, June 24).

"It's downright reckless that Enbridge made the decision to reopen the pipeline with unanswered questions about how the anchor support was damaged and the safety of the dual pipeline," Rep. Debbie Dingell (D-Mich.) said in a statement. "Our priority is the safety of the Great Lakes and I take this matter very seriously."