

Chemical Facility Safety and Security

Industrial Facilities Using Toxic Chemicals Endanger Millions Safer and More Secure Alternatives Are Available

- According to the EPA, nearly 2700 U.S. facilities endanger more than 10,000 people in the event of a catastrophe at the facility, either caused by an accident or a purposeful attack on the facility.
- 110 million Americans live in the shadow of catastrophic poison gas release from one of 300 chemical facilities. And as we saw with the 9/11 attacks, conventional fence-line security cannot prevent a successful attack and the devastating consequences.
- An attack or accident at one of these facilities would result in more casualties than 9/11 or the 1984 disaster at Union Carbide's Bhopal, India plant.

In August 2008, an explosion at the Bayer chemical facility in Institute, West Virginia killed two employees.

An April 21st memo by the staff of the House Energy and Commerce Committee concluded that if the Bayer accident had involved a 37,000 pound tank of methyl isocyanate (MIC) located just 80 feet from the blast, the accident could have "eclipsed the 1984 [Bhopal] disaster in India."

The Bayer plant in Institute is the only remaining U.S. facility that still uses and stores bulk quantities of MIC, the same gas that eventually killed 20,000 people at Union Carbide's Bhopal plant in India.

Safer more secure chemical processes already exist that can replace virtually all of these hazards.

- More than 200 water treatment facilities (including Washington, D.C.) have converted to safer alternatives such as ultraviolet light, eliminating the use of **chlorine** and **sulfur dioxide** gas. But over 100 water treatment plants still threaten more than 100,000 people.
- Ninety-eight petroleum refineries use safer alternatives to **hydrogen fluoride (HF)**. But 50 refineries still threaten millions of people with the use of HF.
- At least 36 electric power plants use safer alternatives to **anhydrous ammonia** gas such as dry urea. But 166 power plants still use anhydrous ammonia gas each threatening an average of 21,506 people.

Congress and the President are finally considering legislation that would require the highest risk plants to convert if there are feasible cost-effective safer alternatives.

But the temporary law they are amending expires October 4, 2009 -- leaving Congress less than four months to get a bill to the White House. The chemical industry is trying to run out the clock and force Congress to renew the 740 word interim law which they ghost wrote in 2006. The existing law actually bars the government from requiring the use of safer processes and exempts all 2,600 water facilities.

Congress should pass the Chemical Security Anti-Terrorism Act to reduce the consequences of an accident or attack by replacing toxic chemicals with available and feasible safer alternatives or storing smaller quantities of high hazard chemicals.