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## CHEMICAL SECURITY ALERT

Quote: ***"Of all the various remaining civilian vulnerabilities in America today, one stands alone as uniquely deadly, pervasive and susceptible to terrorist attack: toxic- inhalation-hazard industrial chemicals... To date the federal government has made no material reduction in the inherent vulnerability of hazardous chemical targets inside the United States."*** --- Richard Falkenrath, former Deputy Homeland Security Adviser to President Bush

### WE HAVE A PROBLEM:

- More than 100 chemical plants in the U.S. threaten a million or more workers and residents in the event of a terrorist attack or accident.<sup>1</sup>
- A large poison gas release at any of these plants could endanger people up to 25 miles away.<sup>2</sup>
- Thousands of freight trains carrying 90-ton tanks of poison gases such as chlorine, ammonia and hydrogen fluoride pass through every major city and suburb.<sup>3</sup>
- The Bush administration along with the oil and chemical industry lobby blocked new programs that would prevent catastrophic attacks at chemical plants.<sup>4</sup>

### SOLUTION:

- There are safe alternatives to most hazardous chemicals, including chlorine, the most widely-used killer gas.
- When safer alternatives are not immediately available, the chemicals can be shipped and stored in smaller quantities.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Tell Congress and the President to enact legislation that requires the substitution of ultra-hazardous chemicals with safer alternatives.

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<sup>1</sup> Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 2000, James C. Belke, "Chemical Accident Risks in U.S. Industry"

<sup>2</sup> Chlorine Institute, 1998, "Estimating the Area Affected by a Chlorine Release"

<sup>3</sup> General Accounting Office, April 2003, "Rail Safety and Security" (GAO-03-435)

<sup>4</sup> Congressional Quarterly, March 9, 2005, "Behind the Scenes: How the EPA Nearly Won and Ultimately Lost the Right to Regulate Chemical Security"

## **The Issue**

As they work, rest and play, millions of Americans are at unnecessary risk from deadly chemicals. Across the U.S., chemical plants continue to use large quantities of obsolete but highly hazardous gases. Many of these plants are located in or near residential neighborhoods. Approximately 4,000 such facilities each put 1,000 or more local people at risk.<sup>5</sup> Terrorism experts have repeatedly warned how easy it would be to attack a plant; one government estimate warned that 100,000 people could be killed or injured within 30 minutes of a rupture in a chlorine tank.<sup>6</sup>

## **The Solution**

The good news is that safer alternatives exist for most of these hazardous substances. Just four replaceable chemicals, anhydrous ammonia, chlorine, sulfur dioxide, and hydrogen fluoride, are used at 55% of chemical processes.<sup>7</sup> Since 2000, 284 facilities have either switched to safer chemicals and processes or moved to safer locations.<sup>8</sup> For example, following the 9/11 attacks, the Blue Plains sewage treatment plant in Washington D.C. switched from chlorine to safer chemicals in just eight weeks. The cost was estimated at less than 50 cents per customer per year.<sup>9</sup> An overhaul of security regulations for chemical plants and trains should be another urgent priority.

## **The Opposition**

Despite President Bush's rhetoric about protecting homeland security, the administration has opposed legislation to eliminate this threat by reducing the use of toxic chemicals. Supported by the chemical lobby, the administration has even gone to court in an attempt to reverse a new Washington D.C. law banning toxic trains from passing through the nation's capital.

## **SEND A MESSAGE:**

Tell your Senator and the President to enact the Chemical Security and Safety Act (S. 2486) which requires the substitution of ultra-hazardous chemicals with safer alternatives.

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<sup>5</sup> Wall Street Journal, August 20, 2004, Robert Block, "Chemical Plants Still Have Few Terror Controls"

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Naval Research Laboratory January 2004, Jay Boris, PhD, testimony before the Washington, D.C. City Council

<sup>7</sup> Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 2000, James C. Belke, "Chemical Accident Risks in U.S. Industry"

<sup>8</sup> Center for American Progress, April, 2006, Paul Orum, "Preventing Toxic Terrorism How Some Chemical Facilities are Removing Danger to American Communities"

<sup>9</sup> PBS NOW March 21, 2003, [http://www.pbs.org/now/transcript/transcript212\\_full.html](http://www.pbs.org/now/transcript/transcript212_full.html)