ACS
Chemistry for Life®

American Chemical Society

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The Honorable Ashton Carter
United States Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

The Honorable Gina McCarthy
Administrator
United States Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Mr. Secretary and Madam Administrator:

I am writing on behalf American Chemical Society (ACS), a not-for-profit, nationally chartered, professional scientific organization with nearly 157,000 members worldwide. ACS advances the chemistry enterprise, seeks to increase public awareness and appreciation of chemistry and its practitioners, and applies its expertise to public policy matters. Some ACS members have requested that we contact you about the continued open burning of munitions and toxic chemicals in the U.S. and ask why, in 2016, is open burning still being used?

In 2012, an explosion at Camp Minden, a former Louisiana Army Ammunition Plant, shattered windows four miles away in the city of Minden and reportedly sent a 7,000 foot plume of smoke into the air. The explosion reportedly resulted from millions of pounds of chemicals and explosives stored improperly at the Camp Minden. Following the explosion, and several months of negotiation, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued an order to have all of the approximately 16 million pounds of munitions and igniters destroyed via open burning.

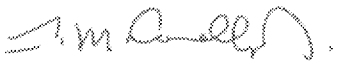
Our members observe that it was only after citizens' grassroots efforts that the open burning plan was abandoned and a contained burn system using an advanced pollution abatement system was installed at Camp Minden to destroy the munitions and igniters.

Given our nation's evolved and enlightened environmental laws and regulations it seems outdated to have open burning remaining as an acceptable method of disposal for munitions and chemicals. Yet, despite the aforementioned, it appears that open burning remains an option at other sites, such as Radford Army Ammunition Plant in Blacksburg, Virginia; Holston Army Ammunition Plant in Kingsport, Tennessee; Clean Harbors in Colfax, Louisiana; and the China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station in China Lake, California.

Since the case of Camp Minden demonstrates that technology exists to allow us to abandon open burning, does it make sense to continue to open burn munitions and other toxic wastes?

I would appreciate your looking into this matter and sharing your findings and thoughts. If ACS and its members can be of assistance to your agencies as you consider this we would be pleased to offer whatever assistance we can.

Sincerely,



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