Message

From: Kelly, Jack (R3 Phila.) [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=6EABB849A5CB43A9904FEB0B53BABC48-JKELLY04]
Sent: 1/16/2020 5:27:46 PM
To: Thomas Barsley [Thomas.barsley@phila.gov]
CC: Patrick ONeill [Patrick.ONeill@Phila.gov]; Dennis Yuen [Dennis.Yuen@phila.gov]
Subject: Fwd: EPA Response to your inquiry

Thomas, per our phone conversation....

Jack Kelly
On Scene Coordinator
EPA Region III, Philadelphia
215-514-6792 (cell)
215-814-3112 (office)

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Seneca, Roy" <Seneca.Roy@epa.gov>
Date: January 15, 2020 at 2:42:32 PM EST
To: "Kelly, Jack (R3 Phila.)" <Kelly.Jack@epa.gov>
Subject: FW: EPA Response to your inquiry

Jack --- Here's the response we sent to the reporter. Most of this was written by HQ. I have not seen an article yet. I will pass on the article when it is posted online. Hope this helps. – Roy

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From: Seneca, Roy
Sent: Wednesday, January 15, 2020 11:21 AM
To: Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net>
Cc: White, Terri-A <White.Terri-A@epa.gov>
Subject: EPA Response to your inquiry
Importance: High

Corbin – Once again, sorry for the delay. Thanks for the extension. Here is the EPA Response:

EPA Response: EPA is very concerned about public and environmental health in the aftermath of the refinery explosion. We have been actively involved, working in close coordination with state and the City of Philadelphia to oversee compliance of the Clean Air Act permit at the PES facility. We would expect overall benzene emissions to be lower now since the plant is no longer operational.

EPA continues to be committed to working to reduce emissions of toxic air pollution from all types of facilities, including refineries. As required by a 2015 EPA regulation, all US refineries have been collecting benzene concentration data at the perimeter (fence-line) of their facilities and started submitting those data to EPA in summer 2019.

Information about the PES facility's fence-line monitoring data was shared with the City of Philadelphia in May, 2019 and these data have been available publicly through EPA's Webfire data portal since June, 2019. Data continues to be collected and posted on a quarterly basis. EPA also shares general risk related information on benzene and other chemicals on our websites. As we go about our work in communities across the country, we work closely with state and tribal agencies and local partners on the ground. We often rely on permitting agencies and local partners to take the lead on connecting to the community to share information about local public health concerns and risks.

It is important to note that benzene concentration levels monitored at the perimeter of refineries do not reflect benzene levels in the community. Rather the monitoring data, and in particular, the annual average difference between upwind and downwind monitoring values is an indicator of the benzene emissions from facilities. Upon receipt of the first information submittals in May 2019, EPA began working with State and local agencies to evaluate the data and compare it to the requirements of the 2015 Refinery Sector Rule. The rule, under specific circumstances, requires facilities to identify the root causes of exceedances and take corrective actions. The PES refinery did submit a root cause analysis and corrective action plan to the City of Philadelphia in June, 2019 and identified measures taken to reduce fugitive emissions of benzene.

From: Seneca, Roy
Sent: Wednesday, January 15, 2020 10:30 AM
To: Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net>
Cc: White, Terri-A <White.Terri-A@epa.gov>
Subject: Request for comment on PES benzene emissions from E&E and NBC
Importance: High

Corbin – We are working on a response to this email and hope to have something for you shortly. - Roy

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From: Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net>
Sent: Monday, January 13, 2020 7:29 PM
To: R3Press <R3Press@epa.gov>
Cc: Lisa Riordan Seville <lriordanseville@gmail.com>
Subject: Request for comment on PES benzene emissions from E&E and NBC

Hi, I'm working on a story with NBC News about public health dangers posed by the consistently high benzene emissions from the PES refinery that's set to run Wednesday morning.

EPA data show that the refinery exceeded the benzene emissions limit for all but 12 weeks from the end of January 2018 to late September 2019 -- an 86-week span. For the most recent quarter, the refinery's average annual benzene emissions were also 49 micrograms per cubic meter. That was higher than any other refinery that reported data to EPA and five times above the agency's benzene "action level." Former EPA officials say the action level isn't sufficiently protective of public health and that EPA should have done more to ensure the refinery stays well below that emission threshold.

What is EPA doing to reduce the PES emissions, which actually increased after the explosive fire? Why hasn't EPA done more to address the problem and protect nearby residents -- many of whom are people of color living below the poverty line -- from the carcinogenic gases? Why hasn't EPA, whose regional headquarters are only three miles from the refinery, informed the public about PES's significant benzene problems?

Please get back to us with any comments by the end of Tuesday, Jan. 14.

Thanks,
Corbin

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Contact me securely via Signal, WhatsApp or corbin.hiar@protonmail.com

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