

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Rep. David Price (D-NC) today called for federal regulations to better prepare local communities and first responders in the event of a hazmat fire like the one at Apex's EQ facility in 2006.

The U.S. Chemical Safety Board (CSB) released its final recommendations this morning, concluding that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) should require hazardous waste facilities to provide up-to-date information to state and local emergency response officials on the materials stored at each facility.

In a letter to EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson, Price wrote, "I strongly urge you to adopt the CSB recommendation to ensure that emergency response personnel are better prepared to respond to the next...incident."

Price noted that the North Carolina General Assembly has already adopted enhanced safety requirements for hazardous waste facilities in the state, but he says there should be nationwide standards to protect all communities.

Price is also concerned that there are other safety issues related to the 2006 EQ fire that he wants to further examine and discuss with federal regulators. These include whether there are clear federal regulations on the transport of unspent oxygen canisters and whether further federal action should be taken to improve fire safety standards for the storage and monitoring of hazardous materials.

The text of Price's letter follows below.

April 16, 2008

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The Honorable Stephen Johnson

Administrator

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Ariel Rios Building

1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.

Washington, DC 20460

Dear Mr. Administrator:

I am writing in regard to the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board's (CSB) April 16, 2008, case study on a 2006 fire at a waste storage facility in Apex, North Carolina.

On October 5, 2006, a fire broke out at the Environmental Quality Company's (EQ) hazardous waste treatment, storage and disposal facility in Apex, which is located in my congressional district. The fire resulted in the evacuation of thousands of town residents and the complete destruction of the hazardous waste building at the facility.

During the course of its investigation, CSB discovered that EQ had not informed the Local Emergency Planning Committee or emergency response personnel in Apex of the types, quantities, and locations of hazardous materials being stored in the facility. Not only did this prevent emergency responders from being able to pre-plan for emergency events at the EQ facility, it also limited them to a defensive response to the fire.

April 16, 2008

The CSB has formally recommended that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) require permitted hazardous waste treatment, storage, and disposal facilities (TSDF) to provide written information to state and local emergency response officials on the types, approximate quantities, and locations of materials within a facility, and to periodically update that information. As you know, current EPA regulations require that permitted companies familiarize local authorities with their facilities, but do not specify the information that must be shared or how frequently that information must be updated. I strongly urge you to adopt the CSB recommendation to ensure that emergency response personnel are better prepared to respond to the next TSDF incident.

Although the North Carolina General Assembly approved legislation in 2007 to increase the inspection and notification requirements for hazardous waste storage facilities in the state, EPA action is needed to ensure that TSDF facilities around the nation are required to provide basic information to local communities about their toxic waste inventories.

Thank you in advance for your time and attention. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

DAVID PRICE

Member of Congress

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