

Washington, D.C. – Today, Rep. David Price (D-NC) hailed unanimous House passage of legislation to address a serious shortfall in hazardous waste management in the aftermath of the 2006 fire at the EQ waste facility in Apex. The fire, which forced the evacuation of approximately 15,000 residents, was allowed to burn in part because first responders did not have access to needed information on the kinds of waste being stored at the facility; those paper records were stored onsite and were not accessible because of the fire. The new legislation will improve public safety and cut costs for businesses by establishing an electronic manifest (e-manifest) system for tracking hazardous substances.

"Having hazardous waste tracking and storage information readily available in electronic form will help ensure that, in the event of an accident like the Apex fire, emergency personnel have the information they need to make quick, effective response decisions to keep the public safe," Rep. Price said. "I also expect the new e-manifest system to reduce costs for businesses by relieving what is currently a significant paperwork burden."

Under the current, cradle-to-grave, paper-based tracking system, all parties in the chain of shipping -- including the generator, transporter, storage and disposal facility -- must sign and keep one of the 7 manually-updated manifest copies. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, nearly 140,000 regulated entities across 45 industries currently track between 2.5 million to 5 million hazardous waste manifests annually at a cost between \$200 million and \$500 million per year. The e-manifest system will relieve this paperwork burden, and provide improved quality of data, as well as more timely and accessible information on hazardous waste shipments. By bringing real-time tracking closer to reality, the e-manifest system will make feasible one-stop reporting of manifest data and increase the agency's inspection and enforcement capabilities.

The bill is S. 710, legislation based on a measure Rep. Price introduced in the 111th Congress as H.R. 3106, the Hazardous Waste Electronic Manifest Establishment Act. Following Senate passage of the bill, Rep. Price helped persuade the Energy and Commerce Committee to approve the measure on a bipartisan basis and bring it to the House floor for a vote. With President Obama's signature, the legislation will become law.

The e-manifest system will be funded by fees collected from covered entities. Use of the system will be voluntary, but the cost-savings and administrative burden the e-manifest system will relieve should provide businesses with a strong incentive to adopt it.

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