

News From...
The New Jersey Work Environment Council

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Contact: Denise Patel
WEC Campaign Organizer
(609) 695-7100, ext 305

GOVERNOR CORZINE PROPOSES ROLL BACK ON CHEMICAL SECURITY POLICY
Groups demand safety, not secrecy

Trenton – Twenty-seven labor, environmental, and community groups today called on Governor Jon Corzine to strike language from a proposed NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) rule that could hide information about potential toxic disasters at industrial facilities from communities across the state. The groups contend that the effort will not thwart terrorists from planning an attack on New Jersey's industrial facilities, but will instead keep workers and communities in the dark about potential dangers.

"This proposal will not stop terrorists from planning an attack. It will make it harder for plant workers and the people living near the plants to prepare," said John Pajak, a worker at the Conoco Phillips oil refinery in Linden and an Executive Board member of International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 877.

On September 15, 2008, DEP proposed changing the definition of "security information" under the *Toxic Catastrophe Prevention Act* (TCPA) to include "off-site consequence" data which includes how far a toxic cloud could spread from an industrial plant into nearby communities and how many people could be harmed by it. Ninety-seven potentially hazardous chemical plants, oil refineries, water treatment operations, and other facilities using chlorine and/or other highly toxic or flammable substances are regulated under TCPA and/or the federal Clean Air Act. Nineteen of 21 New Jersey counties host these facilities.

"This proposal can take away our right to know if a chemical disaster could occur in our communities and how many people could be harmed in such an event. It can endanger our safety, job security, families, and environment," added John Shinn, Staff Representative for United Steelworkers District 4.

In addition, DEP could completely refuse to disclose off-site consequence data from 12 facilities regulated only by DEP, not EPA. EPA's "reading room" in Edison, NJ, continues to provide public access to off-site consequence information for EPA regulated facilities. This kind of information, available under the federal Clean Air Act Section 112(r), has been used by workers and communities for years to keep their jobs and communities safe.

“Since 1983 New Jersey has been a national leader on community right to know,” said Valorie Caffee, Co-Chair of Central Jersey Region, Environmental Justice Alliance. “If Governor Corzine moves forward with this plan, it will be a real setback for workers and citizens fighting to keep their jobs and communities safe.”

“Government that hides information behind closed doors is usually working for special interests, not the public,” stated Jeff Tittel, Director of NJ Sierra Club “Chemical safety is too important to keep out the public.”

Rick Engler, Director of the NJ Work Environment Council added, “By hiding this information, Governor Corzine will undermine his own chemical security policies after making New Jersey a national leader on the issue.”

The coalition delivered a letter to Governor Corzine today signed by 27 labor, community, and environmental groups, including unions that represent workers at industrial facilities regulated by TCPA. A copy of the letter with the organizations that signed on follows.

To read the DEP rule proposal, go to Proposed Rule Amending the *Toxic Catastrophe Prevention Act*, Pages 17-19, at <http://www.nj.gov/dep/rules/proposals/091508b.pdf>
The NJ Work Environment Council released a report in October 2008 identifying the 97 regulated by this rule and how many people could be harmed in a worst-case scenario toxic chemical release. The report is available at www.njwec.org.

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