

**“MAJOR VICTORY FOR REFINERY COMMUNITIES”:
EPA PRAISED FOR DECISION TO WITHDRAW FLAWED REFINERY RISK RULE**

EPA Rule Understated Toxic Air Problem, Studies Show Emissions Can Be 100 Times Higher

HOUSTON & WASHINGTON, D.C.//October 21, 2009///Local officials and the Sierra Club in Texas joined the nonprofit Environmental Integrity Project (EIP) today in supporting actions taken by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to withdraw a January 2009 determination that stricter, risk-based standards for petroleum refineries are not necessary.

The Bush Administration had proposed to stop regulating hazardous air emissions from refineries on the grounds that current emission levels posed no real risk to human health. EIP and other groups called for EPA to reverse the decision because it was based on a gross underestimate of emissions. For example, new remote sensing technologies that directly measure air emissions show that refinery releases of toxic air pollutants can be as much as 100 times higher than EPA predicts.

Eric Schaeffer, director, Environmental Integrity Project, said: **“EPA’s commitment to more accurately assess risks is a significant victory for refinery communities. The people living in these communities have a right to know the real health risks they face from exposure to toxic air pollution. EPA’s actions are the first step in the development of stricter, risk-based standards that protect public health and the environment.”**

Elena Marks, director of Health and Environmental Policy, Mayor’s Office, City of Houston, said: **“We applaud EPA’s efforts to conduct a new risk assessment, and are pleased to see EPA taking steps to correct the fundamental flaws in toxic emissions data identified in the petition filed by the City of Houston under the Data Quality Act last summer. We must reduce unacceptable levels of toxic emissions in our air and hold emitters accountable. A thorough risk assessment based on accurate emissions data is critical to Mayor White’s efforts to clean up Houston’s air and protect communities living near refineries.”**

In July of 2008, the City of Houston filed a petition identifying serious flaws in petrochemical and refinery emissions data that EPA used to conduct the risk assessment that resulted in the flawed January 2009 rule. The City’s petition to EPA noted that remote sensing technologies at a number of facilities drastically undercount emissions of toxics like benzene, a known carcinogen.

Neil Carman, PhD, Clean Air director, Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club, said: “Texas leads the nation in the number of oil refineries, ranks number one in the largest quantity of benzene air pollution, and because the regulations of benzene are too weak to protect fence line communities, many Texas communities are suffering with too much benzene air pollution.”

Petroleum refineries are a major source of pollution in the United States, releasing hundreds of thousands of pounds of toxic pollutants into the air Americans breathe each year. These refineries emit a variety of air toxics including benzene, toluene, hexane, 1, 3-butadiene, and other carcinogenic pollutants that cause serious adverse health effects. Pollution from petroleum refineries can cause cancer, chronic disorders like aplastic anemia and lung structural changes, and acute health disorders such as difficulty breathing, tremors, delirium, coma, and convulsions. Refineries pose a serious health risk to nearby communities.

A copy of the EPA’s proposed withdrawal of the refinery risk analysis determination is available at <http://www.environmentalintegrity.org>.

ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY PROJECT

The Environmental Integrity Project (<http://www.environmentalintegrity.org>) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization established in March of 2002 by former EPA enforcement attorneys to advocate for effective enforcement of environmental laws. EIP has three goals: 1) to provide objective analyses of how the

failure to enforce or implement environmental laws increases pollution and affects public health; 2) to hold federal and state agencies, as well as individual corporations, accountable for failing to enforce or comply with environmental laws; and 3) to help local communities obtain the protection of environmental laws.

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