

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

February 15, 2017

The Honorable Catherine McCabe
Acting Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20460

The Honorable Bob Kaplan
Acting Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency Region 5
Ralph Metcalfe Federal Building
77 West Jackson Boulevard
Chicago, IL 60604-3590

Dear Acting Administrator McCabe and Acting Administrator Kaplan:

We write to urge you to investigate recent reports issued in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel regarding the handling of chemical and hazardous waste by Greif, Inc, including at Mid-America Steel Drum Company, Inc. sites in Milwaukee, St. Francis and Oak Creek, Wisconsin. Both the allegations laid out by a whistleblower who worked in these facilities and the reporting done by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel describe serious and willful violations of federal environmental protections that may have put workers and the community at great risk. This situation merits your immediate attention and we are calling on you to investigate apparent violation of federal laws and to determine if there are federal resources available to help workers and the surrounding communities who may have been impacted by hazardous chemicals.

Accounts suggest serious violations of environmental laws designed to protect human health and the environment. Reports indicate the company burned hazardous chemicals and released toxic emissions into the air, in violation of Clean Air Act requirements and threatening the health of workers and residents in the area near the facility. Other reports describe hazardous chemicals mixed without regard to chemical reactions, and hazardous chemicals poured down drains directly into the local sewer system, in violation of the Clean Water Act. Such hazardous pollution poses a threat to the water quality of Lake Michigan, which is a source of drinking water source for millions of people.

In addition, reports suggest that the facilities routinely avoided requirements for hazardous waste transportation, handling, and processing. These requirements under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act were put in place to protect workers, local communities and the environment from exposure to the most toxic substances used in commerce. Many of these chemicals have extremely serious health impacts and these reports raise great concerns for the health of workers at the facilities and residents in the surrounding communities. The reports also raise serious

concerns about whether these unlabeled hazardous chemicals were inappropriately deposited in landfills, where they may be further endangering public health.


Under federal law, workers and residents have the right to know when toxic substances are released into the environment. These protections are designed to help communities avoid exposure to hazardous chemicals that impact human health. Reporting suggests an ongoing threat of explosions and fires, and describes a company practice of venting hazardous fumes into the surrounding neighborhood without providing notifications to the public, putting the community at grave risk and violating the protections available to the public under the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act.

Each of these concerns represents a serious impact to workers, the surrounding community, and the environment. Put together, they are extremely troubling and must be responded to immediately. We urge you to engage with the local community to ensure residents understand their rights under federal law and have access to health information to address questions these reports will undoubtedly raise.


In addition, we urge you to look into the alleged patterns of willful violations of federal law. The cleanup and management of hazardous waste is a difficult task and it is highly regulated because of the toxicity of the chemicals and potential for grave harm. In addition to the impact to public health, skirting these essential protections is unfair to companies that work to do the right thing for the environment, their workers, and their customers.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Gwen Moore
Member of Congress