

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

February 15, 2017

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

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 hazardous materials transportation law that may have put workers and the community at great risk.


This situation merits your immediate attention. We are calling on you to investigate apparent violation of federal law and to take action to end any imminent threat to workers and the community.

Hazardous materials transportation laws are meant to protect against risks to human life, the environment and property. Reports indicate the company offered and accepted hazardous material without hazard communication requirements—including accurate labels, placards and emergency response information—in violation of federal law. Moreover, reports indicate the employer does not train employees on the proper use of hazardous materials placards. If in fact it is skirting existing federal protections, the company may be transporting a potentially dangerous mix of hazardous materials offsite and alongside the traveling public.


We urge you to look into the alleged pattern of willful violation of federal transportation law. Transporting hazardous material by rail, truck or any other mode is a difficult task and is regulated because of the toxicity of the chemicals and potential for grave harm. These laws require a great deal of care, which comes at a cost. Skirting essential protections is unfair to companies that work to do the right thing for their workers, their customers and the traveling public.

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

CC: Howard McMillan, Acting Deputy Administrator, PHMSA
Lisa O'Donnell, Acting Director, Office of Hazardous Materials Safety- Central Region