



Center for Health, Environment & Justice

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
May 28, 2009

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EPA Pushes Forward With Misguided Bush-Era Policies on Toxic Dioxin

Scientific Integrity of Dioxin Report Takes Back-Burner to Industry Delay Tactics

Falls Church, VA – On Tuesday, EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson announced the agency's plan for releasing the comprehensive human health and exposure assessment for dioxin. Under [pressure](#) from a coalition of environmental groups headed by the Center for Health, Environment & Justice (CHEJ), the EPA has promised an acceleration of the latest review of one of the reassessments. CHEJ is concerned about loopholes in the EPA's plans. The EPA states they "expect" to complete the study by 2010 but then go on to state the, "release date of the final dioxin human health and exposure assessment is dependent on the scope and complexity of the revisions that will need to be made to the 2003 draft assessment based on the contents of the final response to comments report." The EPA's first health assessment of dioxin was completed in 1985 but over the past twenty years, the release of this report has been delayed.

The current review, to be undertaken by the EPA's Science Advisory Board (SAB), was ordered by former President Bush in the final weeks of his presidency. The chemical industry, in an effort to avoid widespread regulation, has lobbied for repeated reviews of the report to delay its release. With no new science to contradict the original findings, [environmentalists](#) are calling for an immediate release of the dioxin report and the cancellation of the latest proposed review by the SAB.

"This plan is merely moving forward with the Bush agenda; not accelerating the release of the dioxin report," said Lois Gibbs, Executive Director of CHEJ. *"Administrator Jackson gives an optimistic deadline for the SAB reassessment in 2010, but leaves a loophole to miss this deadline depending on the 'scope and complexity of the revisions.' Which is it? In October, the EPA estimated that this reassessment would take until 2012. American families have a right to know the serious health impacts of Dioxins. We've waited over twenty years; we can't wait through more red tape and missed deadlines."*

Stephen Lester, Science Director for CHEJ argues that another review by the SAB will not be able to resolve the question of whether there is a threshold for exposure to dioxin: *"It has been the EPA's position since its release of the 1994 draft reassessment report that the issue of whether there's a threshold for dioxin's many adverse health effects is a policy matter, not a scientific issue. That position has not changed. There remains insufficient scientific evidence to clearly establish whether in fact there is a threshold for dioxin. In the absence of a clear scientific basis, the EPA has wisely decided to err on the side of protecting public health by setting no threshold. This is not a scientific issue that can be resolved by another review by the SAB. It is a policy decision."*

Mr. Lester further argues that the chemical industry's push to see the EPA downgrade its classification of dioxin from 'carcinogenic to humans' to 'likely to be carcinogenic to humans' is without merit: *"Whether dioxin is a human carcinogen has been decided by the most prestigious scientific body in the world – the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), a division of the World Health Organization. The IARC committee that reviewed the cancer data on dioxin was comprised of the leading cancer researchers and risk assessors in the world. This same determination – that dioxin is a human carcinogen – has also been made by the National Toxicology Program of the United States' National Institutes of Health, the most prestigious cancer research group in the US. Another review by the SAB will not alter the impeccable credentials of the IARC dioxin committee nor change their conclusions about dioxin which EPA has agreed with."*

Mike Schade, CHEJ PVC Campaign Coordinator to the human element of this debate: *"Until the EPA releases this report, we cannot take action to protect our communities from this potent cancer-causing chemical. Dioxin has been polluting our bodies and the nation's food supply while the EPA has spent over twenty years mired in this endless cycle of reviews of comments of reassessments on a report that remained essentially unchanged. This new plan only validates further delays. Enough is enough. It's time to cut through the red tape."*

In 2001 and 2002, dozens of members of Congress, led by Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), sent letters to EPA calling on the agency to release the study. Almost 10 years later, the study is still in draft form and the EPA now wants to delay the release until at least 2010.

For more information on the history of delays of this report, please visit:
http://besafenet.com/campaigns/dioxin_history.shtml

Letter to EPA from concerned doctors, nurses and scientists:
<http://besafenet.com/pvc/documents/2009/letters/Dioxin%20Letter%20Nurses%20Doctors%20and%20Scientists%20FINAL.pdf>

Letter to EPA from dioxin-impacted communities:
http://besafenet.com/pvc/documents/2009/letters/Dioxin%20Sign%20On%20Letter%20COMMUNITIES%20FINAL%204_.pdf

Quotes from dioxin-impacted communities:
<http://besafenet.com/pvc/documents/2009/letters/Quotes%20From%20Dioxin%20Impacted%20Communitiesx.pdf>

About CHEJ

The Center for Health, Environment & Justice exists to mentor the movement to build healthier communities by empowering people to prevent harm in as many ways, and for as many people, as possible. We believe this can happen when people and groups have the power to play an integral role in promoting human health and environmental integrity. CHEJ's role is to provide the tools, the direction, and the encouragement to these people and groups, so that they can build strong, healthy communities where they live, work, learn, shop, play and pray. Following her successful effort to prevent further harm for the people living in contaminated Love Canal, Lois Gibbs founded CHEJ in 1981 in order to continue mentoring others seeking to prevent harm. CHEJ provides mentoring assistance to communities, homeowners, families and individuals throughout the country. To date, CHEJ has assisted over 10,000 groups nationwide. Currently, CHEJ is mentoring community groups in Florida,

Maryland, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina and Ohio. Details on CHEJ's efforts to help people and communities prevent harm can be found at <http://chej.org/> .