

Monsanto

File

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Date : April 19, 1988 cc: D. G. Bartolanzo - G4WF
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Subject : Krummrich Spill Media Coverage S. L. Foster - G4WF
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Reference : T. J. Slocum - B2ND
A. H. Smith - 1740
TO : W. A. Blase - G4EM
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As you know, we've had extensive coverage by the news media of the phosphorus trichloride spill at Krummrich Sunday afternoon. We're continuing to receive copies of reports and a few press queries.

Yesterday, because of the growing of press queries concerning cause of the accident, we decided to hold a press briefing at the plant at 3 p.m. All four television stations attended, as did the Post-Dispatch and east side newspapers. The plant's statement was also given to several media not attending, including the Associated Press.

At the press briefing, Bill Boyle read his statement to the media and fielded questions for about 20 minutes. He and his staff did a really good job of addressing all questions and issues. Following the briefing, the media were escorted to the spill site, where they did additional filming. Several expressed (pleasant) surprise at how open the plant people were; Herb Humphries of Channel 4 said it was the first time he could remember a company taking the media to the actual spill site, that most companies wouldn't let news people in the gate.

This policy of openness has served well through the entire situation. The media have generally been objective and fair, and the facts of the spill have been reported accurately. Throughout Sunday afternoon, KMOX Radio reports made a special effort to tell listeners that the Monsanto spill was not the very visible black cloud from the trash/warehouse fire.

We're learning that the story has been carried by wire services in several places. I received a call from the Detroit News yesterday; today, DuPont called after having seen the story in the Beaumont, Tex., Enterprise.

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It is possible that the Post-Dispatch will consider having an editorial on what happened, as it did following the Mallinckrodt spill. We should not be surprised if such an editorial is negative, and criticize Monsanto and the East St. Louis Fire Department.

Additional media coverage could result from the Illinois EPA's official accident report and from any action by the Illinois Attorney General's office. In this morning's Post-Dispatch, the Illinois EPA is already saying that the formal evacuation plan should have been implemented (a plan established two years ago and calling for the use of Bi-State buses).

We have three efforts underway: (1) an analysis of media coverage; (2) a PR "post-mortem," focusing on solving the problems such as Corporate and MCC PR learning of the spill from the news media; and (3) certain community relations activities underway with our east side constituencies.



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