

March 25, 1991

Editor
Lake Charles American Press
P. O. Box 2893
Lake Charles, LA 70602

Dear Editor:

As a resident of Calcasieu Parish and an employee of local industry, I was disappointed to see the March 10 letter to the editor, "Chemical War at Home." The author encouraged a "bunker mentality" complete with gas mask. I specifically refer you to the following quotes from the letter, "the high incidence of cancer and respiratory illness...in Lake Charles" and "Lake Charles is a hotspot for these illnesses." While an article in the March 14 American Press, "High Cancer Rate Not Connected To Environment," did an excellent job responding to these statements, I felt some specifics about Southwest Louisiana were in order. It is very important to compare the March 10 letter writer's opinions with the factual information concerning health and the environment in Louisiana.

Facts prove that the Lake Charles Area is NOT a cancer hotspot. LSU recently updated Louisiana's Tumor Registry which is a compilation of cancer cases that have occurred in Louisiana. The data in the Registry show that for the latest period (1983-1986) the annual average cancer rate is 311 cancer cases per 100,000 residents in the Lake Charles region. This compares to 373 cancer cases in the New Orleans region and 351 cases in all of South Louisiana. And the National Cancer Institute's data shows the national average to be 360 cancer cases per 100,000 residents. So the Lake Charles Area's cancer incidence rate is not only below the New Orleans and



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lung cancer rate is higher than the national average, the American Cancer Society says 90% of our lung cancers are caused by smoking while only 4-6% may be attributed to pollution and occupational exposure. In addition, the environmental and occupational exposure totals are probably declining because of the substantial emissions reductions that have occurred over the last 20 years, and because of the major reductions in occupational exposures that occurred over the same period. And, the emissions decreases will continue.



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