

Monsanto

File -
Krummrich

From
(Name-Location-Phone) Diane G. Bartolanzo - G4WF - 2915

Date : August 1, 1988 cc:

Subject : Phosphorus Trichloride release

Reference :

TO : D. R. Bishop

As you are aware, the W. G. Krummrich Plant phosphorus trichloride release attracted a great deal of media attention later in the day yesterday. Soon after the release occurred, WESL radio in East St. Louis called to find out what happened. They heard the community alarm and were trying to find out why we blew it. That call came at around 9:30 a.m. The next media call did not come until around 1:30 p.m. when KMOX called the plant.

Channel 4 reporter Steve Henz called at around 4:30 p.m. saying he heard people were showing up at area hospitals complaining of eye and throat irritation. What happened?

Between 7:00 and 10:00 p.m. I received calls from the Post Dispatch, the Belleville News Democrat, Associated Press in Chicago, KTVI (channel 2), and KSDK (channel 5). Channels 2 and 5 conducted on-camera interviews with me.

With all reporters, I stuck with a basic set of facts: At 7:35 a.m. the plant had a very small release (I stressed that fact with all reporters) of phosphorus trichloride. The community alarm was sounded as a precaution although the amount was so small as to not be a required reportable. The release was over by 7:40, it lasted only five minutes. The all clear was sounded at 8:45. The release was caused by a buildup of pressure in the system that caused a rupture disk to blow. Cause of the pressure buildup is under investigation. I did not volunteer information about people in the hospital unless specifically asked. Then I said I understood some local residents complained of eye and throat irritation and went to local hospitals to be checked out. I only gave numbers when specifically asked.

Follow up questions asked:

Q: Was the Illinois EPA on the scene?

A: No. We did contact them, although not required to since the amount of the release was so small.

Q: Were any community emergency responders on the scene?

A: Yes, the local Emergency Services and Disaster Agency had a representative on hand.

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Q: What is phosphorus trichloride used for?

A: The Krummrich plant makes the product for use in agricultural chemicals.

Q: What does the material do when people are exposed?

A: Phosphorus trichloride forms a white vapor that is irritating to eyes, nose and throat.

Q: Did the vapor leave the plant boundaries?

A: We think it did, however, the amount was so small that it would have greatly dissipated by the time it left the plant property.

Q: Were you surprised at the number of people that showed up at local hospitals?

A: Yes, since the amount of chemical released was so small, we did not believe it would affect anyone, however, if people are experiencing any discomfort it is understandable that they would want to be checked out.

Q: Were any people admitted?

A: I've heard only of one or two and I'm told that was only for observation.

Q: How many times has the plant blown the community alarm this year?

A: I really can't say. I don't have that information with me right now.

Q: How many people were on duty at the plant at the time of the release?

A: I don't have that information. I'll check if you'd like.

Q: Is this the same chemical as was released in April?

A: Yes, the chemical is the same, but the cause different. The April incident occurred during an unloading procedure. That involved a much greater quantity than today's release. Today's incident was caused by a buildup of pressure in the system and resulted in a release of less than three gallons.

Q: Were any employees affected?

A: No. None of our employees were affected by the release.

Q: How do you think the residents of East St. Louis feel about Monsanto's continual releases (Ch. 5)?

A: I think they understand that Monsanto takes its environmental commitments very seriously. This incident will be thoroughly checked out to determine cause, and any necessary actions will be taken.

Diane Bartolanzo

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