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## Homeland Security Should Protect Everyone

January 23, 2003

President George W. Bush  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Bush:

As detailed in today's *Wall Street Journal*, the transport of ultra-hazardous chemicals through the center of our nation's cities poses a serious threat to homeland security. These shipments are temporarily curtailed only during VIP events such as the State of the Union speech. However, on a normal day, 90-ton rail cars of chlorine, ammonia and other toxic chemicals pass within four blocks of the Capitol – and through cities across the country – completely vulnerable to terrorists and endangering millions.

The U.S. Naval Research Laboratory estimates that a terrorist attack on just one railroad tank car carrying these chemicals through Washington, D.C. could “put 100,000 people or more at risk in a 15 to 30 minute time span...people can die at the rate of 100 per second.” And the risk is not just from a deliberate attack. A catastrophic accident involving a chlorine-laden rail car could be equally as lethal.

Since August 2001, Greenpeace has repeatedly written to your administration, urging you to address this threat. It is hypocritical of you to divert chemical shipments only during special VIP events, while leaving so many citizens at risk on a daily basis. Your administration has also been irresponsible in failing to prevent these rolling weapons of mass destruction from passing through U.S. cities every day. Instead, your administration has embraced the chemical industry's position, which is opposed to prevention policies.

In September 2003, bipartisan legislation (B 15-0526) was introduced in the City Council of the District of Columbia to prohibit the transport of hazardous chemicals through Washington, D.C. Today, we urge you to immediately impose a permanent ban on these shipments through the District of Columbia and endorse the City Council bill. We are also asking the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Transportation Security Agency, Amtrak, the Washington Area Metropolitan Transit Authority (Metro), the Maryland Department of Transportation and Virginia Railway Express to support this policy as well.

According to the Argonne National Laboratory, only 10 of the 150 most often shipped hazardous substances are toxic by inhalation. Furthermore, safer substitutes exist for virtually all of the ultra-hazardous chemicals of concern. In fact, the Blue Plains sewage

treatment plant in Washington, D.C. halted its use of chlorine and switched to safer chemicals just eight weeks after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks.

Given the magnitude of the threat, the availability of alternate rail and truck routes, and the availability of safer alternatives, eliminating the risks posed by the use and transport of hazardous chemicals should be at the top of your homeland security agenda. If you have any questions, please contact Rick Hind on our staff at (202) 319-2445.

Sincerely,

John Passacantando  
Executive Director