



ASSOCIATION OF
AMERICAN RAILROADS

NEWS

Communications Department

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***Homeland Security Committee urged to consider safer chemicals;
Chemical companies should stop manufacturing extremely dangerous chemicals***

WASHINGTON, February 27, 2008 - On Tuesday, the House Homeland Security Committee held a hearing on the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Act of 2008, legislation that would strengthen security requirements for chemical facilities. Association of American Railroads President & CEO Edward R. Hamberger issued the following statement:

We can no longer continue to risk the lives of millions of Americans by using, transporting and storing highly toxic chemicals when there are safer alternatives commercially available. It is time for the nation's big chemical companies to stop making the dangerous chemicals that can be replaced by safer substitutes or new technologies currently in the marketplace.

If chemical companies would take that step, the threat of a terrorist attack would be greatly reduced and America would be a safer place. Railroads would no longer be required by the federal government to transport some of the most highly toxic chemicals around the country. Millions of Americans who live in cities or towns near chemical plants or railroad tracks would be safer. Trucks filled with those toxic chemicals would no longer be on our roads and highways. And many manufacturing facilities and water treatment plants would no longer store large quantities of the very chemicals that make attractive targets for terrorists.

At Tuesday's hearing, the general manager of one of the nation's largest groundwater treatment facilities outlined a pilot project in the LA/Long Beach area that eliminates the need to handle, transport and store large amounts of one of the nation's most dangerous chemicals, chlorine gas. He noted that there are numerous commercially available alternatives to chlorine that have "been successfully implemented at various water and wastewater treatment operations across the United States."

His comments are supported by a recent publication from the Center for American Progress (www.aar.org/rail_safety/chemical_security_report.pdf) which reports that as many as 25 water utilities that previously received chlorine gas by rail have switched to safer treatment options such as liquid bleach or ultraviolet light.

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As a result, notes the Center for American Progress, “more than 26 million Americans who live near those facilities are safer and more secure. The only way to truly protect communities is to get unnecessary toxic cargos off the tracks.”

And the National Research Council (part of the National Academy of Sciences) agrees, noting that “the most desirable solution to preventing chemical releases is to reduce or eliminate the hazard where possible, not control it.”

It’s time for the big chemical companies to do their part to help protect America. They should stop manufacturing dangerous chemicals when safer substitutes are available. And if they won’t do it, Congress should do it for them in the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Act of 2008.