

Congress of the United States
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Relations

Testimony Outline – Chief Robert A. Full
February 23, 2004

Chief Robert A. Full
Department of Emergency Services
Allegheny County, Pennsylvania

Emergency Management Coordinator: Allegheny County, PA
Chairman: Allegheny County Local Emergency Planning Committee
Chairman: PA Region 13 Counter Terrorism Task Force

Allegheny County, Pennsylvania has a population of 1.28 million persons in 730 square miles with 130 Municipalities including the City of Pittsburgh. The County is a large center for Research and Development, Retail, Manufacturing, Specialized Medical Care Centers, Major Education Institutions, and numerous other Industries and small businesses. The County is a major transportation hub for North / South, and East / West travel nationally via U.S. Interstate, PA State, and Local Roads. Home to Pittsburgh International Airport, major railroads, under ground and above ground pipelines, traffic tunnels, downtown subway, hundreds of bridges, and the Three Rivers and recognized as being of the busiest inland water ports in the United States. Allegheny County has 235 Chemical facilities classified by the EPA as storing and/or using one of their 300+ chemicals as identified as Extremely Hazardous Substances requiring EPA 302 reporting, and 700 others requiring EPA 312.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee thank you for the opportunity to comment.

This hearing is being held within 2 miles of the heaviest concentration of chemical use, storage, and transportation in this County. That area sits upwind from downtown City of Pittsburgh. With prevailing weather conditions any major release accidental or intentional would drift into the downtown population center within 10 to 15 minutes. Before then 10's of thousands would be affected.

We can all sleep at night through the efforts and success of Local, State, and Federal Government working together to craft key legislation such SARA Title III, and in Pennsylvania Act 165. These to pieces of legislation are responsible for ensuring that plans, training and exercises, information, funding, accountability, emergency response, and mitigation programs are in place to ensure the safety of our community. Chemical safety has been taken very seriously here, and we have been recognized as being very much ahead of the curve in prevention, preparation, and response to a chemical release either from a fixed

facility or a transportation accident.

Security of our chemical facilities from an intentional act from within their own employees as learned from the Bhopal, India event, or an act of domestic or international terrorism has been at issue with local emergency planners the Local Emergency Planning Committee (L.E.P.C.) for years long before September 11, 2001. I am in favor of legislation to ensure the security of all facilities that use, store, and transport chemicals.

The American Chemistry Council has done an excellent job in being out front on the security issue. I know first hand that many of the companies that I am most concerned with are not members of the A.C.C. There continues to be facilities in my County that one could walk straight in under darkness and cause significant damage and public danger.

The first to respond to an emergency is always the affected Local government followed by the State and Federal Governments. The sharing of information on security issues pertaining to chemical plant security and transportation issues needs to be enhanced to include local law enforcement authorities, and the Local Emergency Planning Committees.

Allegheny County and PA Region 13 terror threat assessments have all concluded that targeting one of our many chemical plants and/or the chemical transportation system ranks higher than the threat of someone running down a neighborhood street discharging some sort of military war agent.

The best terrorist event to incur is “never let it happen, in the first place” this could also be said for fire safety as well. You can have the best trained and equipped Fire Department, but when a fire occurs people get hurt, may die, and buildings are lost” All this can be minimized by good fire prevention, but not totally prevented. Strong Fire Codes and enforcement, smoke detectors, exit plans, and sprinklers contribute greatly to reducing bad outcomes. So the best fire to have is “not to have one, in the first place”.

We are continuing to improve our ability to respond to a WMD event locally and nationwide. Congress and the President I you all have made available billions of dollars for homeland security at the local level and it is finally beginning to be seen down at the lowest levels of government and public safety in my County. This is for planning, training, exercises, and equipping responders etc. I personally don't ever want to test the system.

Chemical security enhancement with a partnership between Government and private sector through reasonable legislation and cooperation is a must. We need to do everything to ensure we never experience another terror attack. We already know that chemical facilities and there transportation are a risk. Shame on us if we do not do everything possible to protect them. They sit in our Counties, Cities, Towns, and Neighborhoods.