



April 18, 2017

Mr. Mario Longhi
United States Steel Corporation
600 Grant Street
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15219-2800

Dear Mr. Longhi:

At a time when there is alarming talk in Washington, D.C., of risking the health and safety of Midwest residents by eliminating the Region 5 office of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), we are writing to seek your cooperation in minimizing the potential harm created by the recent release of a known carcinogen by your facility in Portage, Indiana. Your release of hexavalent chromium (Cr6+) into Burns Waterway, a Lake Michigan tributary, serves as yet another reminder of what can happen when companies do not take appropriate safeguards. That is why we are calling for you to keep the Portage facility closed while soil and water testing continues to ensure the safety of all residents along Lake Michigan.

It is our shared responsibility to take strong action to keep our air and water safe and clean for our residents. That is why, immediately after being notified by the Illinois Environment Protection Agency of this release of Cr6+, the Chicago Department of Water Management began conducting its own testing not only at the City's 68th street water crib but also at several sites in and around the discharge area. This work has been done in cooperation with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 5 to ensure elevated levels of Cr6+ do not present themselves in Chicago's water stream. We took these steps proactively out of abundance of caution for Chicago's water supply and the 5.4 million people to whom we supply high-quality drinking water daily.

We are writing to express our strong concern with recent statements and reports suggesting that the your facility will restart its operations later this week even though nearby parks and beaches will remain closed as soil and water testing continues.¹ This decision calls into question the level of caution and concern your company is taking in regards to the public's health and safety. We believe that more testing and the immediate repair of the facility must be completed before operations restart. In addition, we are calling upon the Indiana Department of Environmental Management to share all permit-related documentation with the City's Department of Law so we can work with other government agencies to determine what went wrong.

¹ "EPA: No Significant Chemical Discharge From US Steel Spill," Associated Press. 2017 April 14.

This is not the first time in recent years that communities along the Great Lakes have been threatened by a spill originating from an Indiana facility. In 2007, we, as Members of Congress, passed a resolution expressing disapproval of the British Petroleum (BP) facility in Whiting, Indiana. Seven years later, an oil spill at that same facility justified the concerns we raised and alarmed many residents throughout the region. At the time, we worked with advocates to strengthen regulations preventing pollution from that facility.

We hope you will also join us in voicing support for the work and partnership U.S. EPA Region 5 provides all local and state governments in the Midwest region, particularly given reports that the Regional Office in Chicago may be reduced or even closed.

The City of Chicago, along with all governmental bodies and companies that call the Great Lakes home have a collective responsibility in its stewardship and protection. That is why we hope you will show your commitment to the health and safety of all nearby residents by keeping the facility closed until all testing is completed and investigations are final. Please contact Mr. Alan Stark with the Chicago Department of Water Management at 312-744-7733, Mr. Dave Graham with the Chicago Department of Public Health at 312-745-4034, or Jasmine Hunt with Senator Durbin's staff at 202-224-2152 if you have any questions.

We know that you share our concern about the quality of the region's water supply and hope to work with you to protect our residents. However, we will continue to take independent steps to protect Lake Michigan if necessary.

Sincerely,



Rahm Emanuel
Mayor, City of Chicago



Richard Durbin
U.S. Senator