

EPA/TCEQ statement on risk of additional fires at Arkema facility in Crosby

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Contact: Ryan Vise
Phone: 512-239-5000
After Hrs

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality released the following statement with regard to additional chemical fires expected in the near future at the Arkema facility in Crosby:

"It is the understanding of personnel on the ground that the remaining eight trailers holding chemicals at Arkema's facility in Crosby, Texas, are at risk of catching fire over the next few days. The refrigeration units have been compromised due to the massive flooding, and therefore, we expect these containers to catch fire similar to the way the first trailer did last night.

"First responders are outside the evacuation zone but remain in the area for quick response to ensure the safety of the community around the facility. After assessing the situation, local, state, and federal response managers concluded that the safest course of action was to allow the remaining containers to catch fire, rather than try to send people to move them or put firefighters and first responders directly in harm's way.

"We continue to monitor smoke and air quality, the potential for additional fires in the area, and have aerial assets ready to be deployed, as needed. Everyone in the area should follow the safety instruction of local authorities, specifically staying out of the evacuation zone, avoiding smoke and flood waters."

Additional Background:

As with all smoke, people can limit the potential for adverse health effects by limiting their exposure. This includes staying indoors with doors and windows closed and running the air conditioning (if

possible) with the fresh intake closed. If it is absolutely necessary to be outdoors, try to move out of the plume of smoke and minimize heavy work, exercise, or children's playtime.

On Thursday, one of nine refrigerated trailers of organic peroxide caught fire at the Arkema facility in Crosby. Following this fire, the EPA sent aerial surveillance aircraft to test resulting smoke and did ground-level air quality monitoring. The EPA's plane instrumentation is capable of measuring 78 different chemicals, including peroxides. Neither testing methods found toxic concentration levels in areas away from the evacuated facility.

Local officials are maintaining a 1.5-mile area of evacuation to assure that the public is protected. Air monitoring has confirmed that this is sufficient based on current conditions and anticipated events.

The EPA and the TCEQ are providing direct support to incident commander Michael Sims of the Crosby Volunteer Fire Department, and Chief Bob Royall of the Harris County Fire Marshal's Office, who are leading a coordinated local, state, and federal effort as part of the unified command to control the fire at the Arkema facility in Crosby.