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Results on Blood and Urine Study in Hillcrest: Children and Adults Are Being Exposed to Volatile Organic Compounds

(Corpus Christi, Texas) A landmark bio-monitoring study by the Texas A&M School of Rural Public Health, the Coastal Bend Health Education Center and the Citizens for Environmental Justice found that of the people studied in the fence-line community of Hillcrest, Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) were detected in each of the blood and urine samples, and the Hillcrest residents studied were **14 times higher** for Benzene, a carcinogen, than a study of gas station attendants in Mexico (Romieu et al.1995).

“We have been extremely concerned about the health of the community living by these oil giants, so for years we advocated for a study that would analyze blood and urine in the residents,” said Suzie Canales, Executive Director of Citizens for Environmental Justice. “The results are in; the results are alarming and disturbing. We hope this will prompt our city leaders to do the right thing: instead of talking of revitalizing the community, bringing more children into an area that is highly toxic, they should be working to relocate the community in a manner that is fair to the people.”

Of particular concern to CFEJ are the results of the children studied: the concentrations of VOCs in children’s urine ranged from 28 ng/ml to 945 ng/ml.

“Children are often outdoors, playing and running around,” said Jean Salone, a Hillcrest resident and CFEJ member who Chaired the study. “Their little bodies are still growing; they breathe faster and take in more pollution. It’s disgraceful that the city doesn’t care, instead, they want to bring in more children to the area.”



Since the days of racial zoning by the city of Corpus Christi, Hillcrest residents, most of which are people of color and low-income, continue to reside adjacent to two major oil refineries and tank farms. Although the racial restrictions were lifted long ago, many people who wish to move to a safer area cannot afford to move; essentially they are trapped in the racial zoning of the past, bearing more than their fair share of pollution.

(black and white photo by Peter Essick)

- **Median Concentration for Total BENZENE in Blood**

NHANES Study (represents general population in U.S.)	0.05 ng/ml
Romieu et al (gas station attendants)	0.63 ng/ml
Hillcrest Study Group	14 ng/ml

- Benzene, Ethyl-Benzene, Toluene, Xylenes (BTEX) in Hillcrest ranged from 74 ng/ml to 821 ng/ml

"This study highlights the cover up of refinery communities globally who suffer from

toxic poisoning and government neglect," said Denny Larson Director of Global Community Monitor. "Shame on Texas and our nation."



Dr. KC Donnelly, the lead investigator in the study and the author of the summary report said, "Our research team is pleased with the outcome of the study conducted in the Hillcrest Community. The results confirm that our analytical methods are sensitive and able to detect volatile compounds in blood and urine. The results from 59 individuals in the community indicate

that every sample collected had detectable levels of volatile organic compounds. The median (or mid-point) concentration detected in blood was almost 14 times higher than the median concentration detected in gas station attendants in a separate study conducted in Mexico. We hope to complete analysis of additional samples from a study in Harris County. The results from this new study will provide a more direct comparison with the results from the Hillcrest Community."

A meeting will be held on November 10, 2008 at 6:00 p.m. at the Oveal Senior Center. At 1414 Martin Luther King in Corpus Christi, Texas.

Dr. KC Donnelly will be present to answer questions from the community.

(Picture: The fence-line community of Hillcrest. Major oil refiners Flint Hills Resources East (Koch Refinery) and Citgo East are immediately adjacent to the community)

