

For Immediate Release

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Contacts:

Suzie Canales, Citizens for Environmental Justice (CFE) 361-334-6764 c: 816-9134

Denny Larson, Refinery Reform Campaign (RRC) 415-845-4705

## **The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) Bends Over Backwards to Protect Industry Over Human Health Citizens for Environmental Justice Take Issue with TCEQ to Senator Hinojosa**

(Corpus Christi, Texas) On June 8, 2006, Citizens for Environmental Justice joined by other Corpus Christi residents and national environmentalist from Austin, Texas and Washington DC attended a "Notice of Comment Hearing" regarding Significant Revision Permit no. 01420, CITGO Refinery & Chemical Company LP West Plant.

Comments were presented and concerns came to light over the CITGO West coker unit (pictured) which produces a horrendous amount of toxic chemicals that are released into the environment twice a day. A DVD of the coker releasing uncontrolled toxic chemicals was presented by CFEJ. It clearly evidenced a huge black cloud being released that deposited coke dust on the lens of the camcorder and was visible on the screen during the presentation.



The DVD and several other relevant concerns were entered into the record as official Comments that night.

On December 18, 2006, the Executive Director of TCEQ responded to the comments and concerns in a letter stating, "The plume of smoke and particulate presented on the DVD submitted may be categorized as an upset."

CFEJ sent a letter of query to TCEQ on February 9, 2007 asserting that given the fact that the TCEQ acknowledges that the plume “may be an upset” why then didn’t CITGO report it as such as required by law?

Susan Clewis, regional director of TCEQ region 14, answered with a rejoinder to CFEJ’s letter of February 9, 2007 that states, in part, “In your letter, you characterize these emissions as upsets emissions and request to be informed of action TCEQ will take...”

“Clearly, nowhere in our letter to the TCEQ did we write the plume was an upset, it’s the Executive Director that made that statement.” Suzie Canales with CFEJ remarked, “Region 14 (TCEQ) should be very ashamed; because of their concerns for our issues and in an effort to help us, environmentalists flew in from Washington DC yet no one from the local TCEQ office bothered to attend the public meeting of June 8, 2006 in Corpus Christi. This lack of participation on their part clearly demonstrates how little importance they place on addressing the issues of environmental justice for the citizens of Corpus Christi. They’re sending the message that they see us as expendable!”

The CFEJ has approached Senator Hinojosa’s office to assist them by convening a meeting between the parties. “TCEQ needs to be accountable to the citizens they are supposed to be protecting, not the industry they propose to be regulating,” Canales added.

Citizens for Environmental Justice are a grassroots group based in Corpus Christi, Texas who works to achieve environmental justice. Their website is: [www.cfejcorpuschristi.org](http://www.cfejcorpuschristi.org) or [www.citgojustice.org](http://www.citgojustice.org). The Refinery Reform Campaign is a national campaign that seeks to clean up refineries. The RRC’s website is: [www.refineryreform.org](http://www.refineryreform.org)

Suzie Canales is the recipient of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute award for outstanding achievements in Environmental Justice.