

For Immediate Release

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Local and National Environmental Justice Groups Question Pollution Prevention Partnership's Memorandum of Agreement on Ozone.

(Corpus Christi, Texas) On the eve of a public signing ceremony of Corpus Christi 8-03 Flex Agreement between the Pollution Prevention Partnership (PPP) and state and federal agencies, local and national environmental justice groups question the effectiveness of such an agreement in light of scientific reports on ozone, recent criminal convictions and industry's continued permit applications proposing to increase emissions, including ozone forming compounds.

"While I applaud the efforts of local, state, and federal leaders and agencies toward improving air quality in Corpus Christi, I can't help but think of the recent criminal conviction of CITGO involving violations of the Clean Air Act," said criminologist, Dr. Melissa L. Jarrell. "If corporations knowingly pollute the environment and the community with a wide range of toxic chemicals and their actions are ignored by community leaders and the media, agreements and public signings (as well as receptions and media events) are little more than public relations strategies to shift public attention away from corporate environmental crime."

The press release by Pollution Prevention Partnership (PPP) announcing the public signing of the memorandum, states, in part, "...a plan for the community to implement voluntary, proactive steps to maintain our attainment status of ozone and healthy air quality."

The environmental justice groups appreciate the efforts of the PPP as well as local and state agencies to reduce emissions, but statements such as "...and healthy air quality," (above) is misleading and does a huge disservice to the environmental justice communities suffering daily at the hands of the worst corporate refinery criminals in the nation. In addition, the current standard for ozone is not protective of human health. Studies have shown adverse impacts on human health at levels lower than the current standard.

Overwhelming scientific evidence, including reviews by independent scientists and EPA's Clean Air Act Scientific Advisory Committee confirm that the current EPA standard for ozone is not protective of human health.

On June 2007, EPA proposed to strengthen the standard from 0.08 ppm (the current standard is effectively 0.084 ppm due to a loophole that allows states to round down ozone concentrations) to 0.070 ppm to 0.075 ppm; however, EPA

proposed revision ignores the recommendation of its own science advisors who proposed strengthening the standard to 0.060 ppm to 0.070 ppm.

“For several years certain groups in Corpus Christi have claimed that our air is clean simply because we’re in attainment,” said Suzie Canales with Citizens for Environmental Justice. “The fact is, we’re barely in attainment and studies show that the current standard for ozone does not protect human health. Our air is *not* healthy. It does a huge disservice to the community to continue to wear blinders when it comes to ozone. The people that suffer the most from this propaganda are sensitive populations like children and the elderly. Ozone kills. Concern for human health must come before anything else.”

The environmental justice groups will submit comments before the deadline of October 9, 2007 and will include recommendations suggested by The American Lung Association:

- **Setting the 8-hour primary standard for ozone of 0.060 ppm to protect public health with the margin of safety required by the Clean Air Act.**
- **EPA must eliminate the rounding down loophole.**

The Environmental Justice groups will continue to fight permits from industry that propose to increase emissions, including ozone forming compounds.

The EJ groups also pointed out that EPA has failed its federal mandate to develop and enforce standards for toxic gases such as benzene, which are known to cause cancer and other serious health problems. “Ozone attainment does not address toxic exposures such as benzene pollution from Corpus Christi refineries,” said Denny Larson, of National Refinery Reform Campaign. “Citgo was recently found guilty of violating the Clean Air Act. Corpus Christi has been in the top tier of benzene readings in the last several years and Valero and Flint Hills (Koch) made the top 10 list of worst polluters for carcinogens in the nation.”

Suzie Canales is the Recipient of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute Award for Outstanding Achievements in Environmental Justice.