

UPDATE 3/18/19 - TEJAS STATEMENT ON THE FIRE AT INTERCONTINENTAL TERMINALS CO. LLC NAPHTHA AND XYLENE EXPOSURE ALONG HOUSTON SHIP CHANNEL

Overview: At 3:30 p.m. a fire was reported at Intercontinental Terminals Co. LLC in Deer Park, Texas.

An official statement disclosed **NAPHTHA** a component of gasoline is the chemical being burned and the as of 7 p.m. the fire has spread to another tank containing **XYLENE**, HAZMAT is evaluating the situation. An **evacuation order has not been ordered**, but a shelter-in-place is in effect until further notice. ITC officials are working with local agencies to keep abreast of the situation as it continues. Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo and Commissioner Precinct 2 Adrian Garcia gave a statement on site and offered support and services as needed. At this time, the cause of the fire is undetermined. At 5:30 AM on March 18, 2019 ITC Deer Park reported the fire spread to adjacent tanks bringing the total of tank involved to eight, although one tank was reported as empty. Current chemical stored in tanks include, NAPHTHA, XYLENE and newly TOLUENE.

Update: 10:00am Intercontinental Terminals Company LLC Public Information Officer Update – Emergency responders continue to work on controlling the fire. Although the risk of the **EXPLOSION** is **MINIMAL**, we continue to take precaution to further reduce the possibility. Highway 225 has reopened, however portions of Independence Parkway remain closed north of 225. All ITC personnel is accounted for. ITC is coordinating its response with representatives of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the US Environmental Protection Agency, the US Coast Guard, Harris County and other Federal, State and local entities. Deer Park Shelter-in-place has been lifted.

Contact PIO Support Team at 281.884.0220 at Intercontinental Terminals for additional information about ITC.

CHEMICALS OF CONCERN:

NAPHTHA can affect you when breathed in and by passing through your skin. Symptoms of acute exposure may include irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, headaches, dizziness, nausea and vomiting. High exposures can cause lightheadedness, fatigue. Repeated exposure may cause damage to the nervous system and kidney damage.¹

XYLENE exposure at high levels can lead to irritation of eyes, nose and throat; cause difficulties breathing; headaches; delayed reaction times; memory difficulties; stomach discomfort and possibly changes in liver and kidneys. It can cause unconsciousness and even death at high levels.²

TOLUENE, is a colorless liquid with a sweet odor. It is used to produce other chemicals including benzene and a component of plastic bottles and nylon. Short-term exposure to low or moderate levels can cause fatigue, weakness, memory loss, nausea, and appetite loss. Long-term exposure can cause irritation of the eyes or lungs, headaches and dizziness. Toluene may also affect the nervous system and reproductive systems and cause developmental problems in children.³

For these and additional concerns Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services urges residents inside and outside the area to seek safety with friends and relatives further from the facility. Please remain calm and cautious of current and future road closures and weather events that may complicate the situation. Local officials have not called for a mandatory evacuation. Tejas also urges the surrounding municipalities including but not limited to La Porte, Pasadena, Channelview, Baytown, Jacinto City and communities in the east end of Houston to take precautions and limit outdoor exposure due to unknown substances that the plume may carry. Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services is not a government agency or county entity to mandate evacuation. We are a 501(c)3 registered environmental advocacy nonprofit, that seeks to educate and inform communities on the environmental issues of concern.

Harris County officials have stated that the event may spread throughout the night and over the next following days. Due to the concentration of production, storage and other sensitive materials in and around the area we remind the public to stay abreast of the situation as they are out during St. Patrick's Day holiday.

Due to the frequency of events endangering public health such as this one and the fire at the **ExxonMobil** facility on **March 16, 2019** in Baytown, Texas we remain adamant that local, county and state officials create a **regional air toxics plan** and support the implementation of the **Chemical Disaster Rule** to prevent the endangerment of populations sitting on the fenceline of these hazardous facilities and catastrophic events.

Following proper Shelter-in-place protocol remember to store medications and any necessary items/documents near you. Vulnerable populations may be especially susceptible to these events including those with ailments, children and the elderly.

What does Shelter-in-place mean?

Go inside immediately. Close and secure all doors and windows. Turn off all ventilation systems (air conditioning, heating). Bring pets indoors. Listen to the radio or television and watch for visible smoke. It is important to consider the temperature.

Note: All plant information was gathered from the Intercontinental Terminals Company LLC official company website <http://www.item.com/news/>

Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services (T.e.j.a.s.) is a 501c3 registered nonprofit, dedicated to providing community members with the tools necessary to create sustainable, environmentally healthy communities by educating individuals on health concerns and implications arising from environmental pollution, empowering individuals with an understanding of applicable environmental laws and regulations and promoting their enforcement, and offering community building skills and resources for effective community action and greater public participation.

¹ New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, <https://nj.gov/health/eoh/rtkweb/documents/fs/0518.pdf>

²Center for International Environmental Law, <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/tf.asp?id=295&tid=53>

³Agency for Toxic Substance Control & Disease Registry, <https://www.ciel.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Plastic-and-Health-The-Hidden-Costs-of-a-Plastic-Planet-February-2019.pdf>