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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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Ron Curry  
Region 6, U.S. EPA  
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Washington, D.C.

Dear Administrator Curry:

I'm writing you today regarding the Environmental Protection Agency's decision to use an open-burn process at Camp Minden and potential safety and environmental impacts from the burn. I previously submitted a letter expressing concern that the final agreement excludes all but one technique of disposal. To date, I have heard from a number of concerned citizens opposing the EPA's decision to use an "open-tray burn" process at Camp Minden due to potential health hazards.

I fully appreciate the need for a quick resolution to this imminent threat. The Army Explosive Safety Board previously advised that deterioration of the propellants could greatly increase the risk of explosion by August 2015. The stabilizers in the explosives continue to degrade, and the explosives will become more and more unstable and the likelihood of auto-ignition will increase. However, in order to address ongoing concerns and potential faulty information surrounding the disposal process, I am requesting the EPA provide written responses to the following questions.

1. The EPA has previously completed a bench-scale burn of the materials to evaluate the physical and chemical properties as well as determine air monitoring requirements before any large scale activity. Will the EPA provide the data it has collected on the methods examined? Will the EPA share with my office its comparison of potential health hazards to verify that the open burn is the safest way?
2. Has an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) been conducted? Has the EPA granted an exemption to an EIS to the U.S. Army, Louisiana Military Department (LMD, or other involved parties?
3. According to official documents, on June 5, 2014, the Louisiana State Police (LSP), in coordination with the LMD, conducted a training exercise, using 128 lbs. of black powder previously owned by Explo Systems and listed on the inventory provided by the ESB. Was this instance the "bench scale burn" completed for evaluation purposes and, if so, was the test burn announced publicly prior to the trial burn?
4. The EPA's publicly available documents which reference the disposal process state that "(s)hould the open-burning response action generate hazardous waste residues requiring off-site disposal,..." Does the EPA have data or estimated prediction on the likelihood of this outcome? What is the public health hazard associated with it?
5. On Page 14 of the EPA's, "Request for Approval of a Time-Critical Removal at the Explo Systems" it states that previous materials disposed of through open-burn was analyzed and will be disposed of at an appropriately permitted facility, and that a final

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report of the operations is pending. Is this final report now available? Does that report contain health hazard information? If so, please provide a copy for my office to review.

6. Lastly, can you confirm that both EPA and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LMDQ) will continue to check air quality and potential groundwater contamination during the burning process, as previously stated? Will that take place as an EIS, risk assessment, or air modeling study?

While I understand that the EPA has previously worked to protect human health and minimize environmental impacts on the air, water, and soil, I want to make sure that these protections remain in place throughout the process. If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me personally or Josh Hodges at 202-224-4623.

Sincerely,



David Vitter  
United States Senate

CC: Carl Edlund, Director, Superfund Division EPA Region 6