



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD - **Public Hearing**

Conrail Derailment in Paulsboro, NJ with Vinyl Chloride Release

GROUP	3
EXHIBIT	
AD	

Agency / Organization

Washington Township

Title

Washington Township
Fire Fighters Concerns

December 3, 2012

Dear Chief Hoffman,

This correspondence is to inform the Washington Township Fire District administration of the perilous situation that the Washington Township firefighters were subjected to while operating as part of the Gloucester County CBRNE team and Decontamination unit at the Paulsboro train derailment incident on November 30th, 2012. Due to neglect on behalf of Gloucester County personnel to maintain the CBRNE team equipment cache, our members were assigned to operate in a hazardous environment without the fundamental benefit of gas detection equipment.

The lack of proper equipment was discovered while the team was in staging. The 1 multi-gas meter (the only multi-gas meter) on the truck known as CBRNE-1 was found to be in a non-functional state and the large area metering system known as the Area-Rae was not charged and lacked the computer interface and therefore useless. Both of these tools are of the highest necessity when working at a hazardous material incident. The lack of gas detection equipment impaired our ability to make critical operational decisions including where to establish our forward area of operations and the identification of the hot zone. In essence, our team was blind as to where the dangerous levels of toxic gas existed. Even the portable weather station was useless without the computer and software to receive the data from the station. The levels of vinyl chloride that our members were subjected to are therefore unknown.

This is not the first incident at which we have experienced a lack of available gas detection equipment. This deficiency was noted in previous correspondence between the Fire District and the County. It has, for some time, been seen by our members as a major flaw that the vast majority of gas detection and identification equipment is assigned to the County owned and operated SUV's and is not always available at the incident scene. This was the case on Friday. The County SUV's were not on location in Paulsboro and repeated requests to retrieve the equipment went unanswered.

In closing, it is COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE to expect a hazmat team to operate without the availability of properly maintained gas detection equipment. This avoidable situation put our members' short and long term health in jeopardy. It is our position that Gloucester County continues to inadequately equip and maintain its CBRNE team assets. This apparent lack of concern on the County's part to rectify its shortcomings, after repeated requests on our part, continues to subject our members to undo hazards. We are therefore requesting that the Washington Township Fire District discontinue all involvement with the Gloucester County CBRNE and Decontamination Teams effective immediately. We further believe that only a complete change of leadership of the team would allow us to consider reversing our position on this matter.

Respectfully Submitted,

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