

Kathy Kerridge: Is Benicia prepared?

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On April 26 in Superior, Wisc., there was an explosion at the Husky oil refinery. According to the Chicago Tribune, a tank of crude oil or asphalt exploded, prompting authorities to order the evacuation of a 3-mile (5-kilometer) radius around the refinery, as well as a 10-mile (16-kilometer) corridor south of it where the smoke was heading. Eleven people were injured. A huge cloud of black smoke was released from burning asphalt that was too hot to put out. Residents were not told what was in the smoke or why it was so black.

This made me wonder about our industrial park. If there was a major chemical release, would people know what to do? Would we know what was being released? How many people in Benicia know what shelter in place really means? Would we rush to school to pick up our kids and expose them and us to potential harmful chemicals on the way to the car or would we and the school shelter in place? If we had to evacuate what would be the best route to take? How would we find out any of this? We know that Benicia has an emergency response system. But what do we do when we hear the sirens? We also know that people living next to the refinery when Valero shut down last year and others who had to evacuate the Industrial Park were told nothing.

Our emergency response system is inadequate. We don't know what is in the air during an accident or on a daily basis. As Ralph Dennis pointed out last week, we don't have monitors to track what is in the air. A Community Industrial Safety Ordinance could help make sure that we would have a good emergency response system and air monitors. The ordinance would require Valero to pay.

I would want to know what to do in an accident and I don't know now. Please support an Industrial Safety Ordinance. We are the only refinery town in the Bay Area without one.

— **Kathy Kerridge/Benicia**