



ADRIAN GARCIA COMMISSIONER

March 22, 2019

Jon Niermann, MC100
Chairman, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
P.O. Box 13087
Austin, TX 78711-3087

Dear Chairman Niermann,

Early on March 18, 2019, TCEQ officials shut down air quality monitors in Deer Park, Texas supposedly for maintenance.

At the time, there was a massive chemical fire at the Intercontinental Terminal Company in Deer Park which had been growing in intensity for many hours and a miles-wide black plume was wafting from the facility. The plume was easily visible and all the major media outlets in Harris County were reporting the details. Among those details were residents' concerns about air quality.

In light of this fire and its aftermath, and the fact that this is a time of year when industrial facilities are typically performing maintenance operations, I do not understand the decision to remove monitors from service. Especially since they were initially operational when the fire first began, giving the TCEQ ample time to change any pre-scheduled maintenance plans. The TCEQ should have realized that the information from these monitors would have been critical to local emergency responses.

I need an explanation of why the monitors were shut down, and provide any written policy and other correspondence that supports the decision. Please provide the Commission's rationale for removing the monitors from service during an emergency event with significant air quality implications, and who made the decision to do so.

During an event such as this, citizens rely on its government officials to provide accurate, timely and transparent information to help them make critical decisions about themselves and their families. Due to TCEQ's action, we were unable to provide such information, and because the information was unavailable the health of our citizens could have been put in harm's way.



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As an elected official, it is incumbent upon me to ensure the residents of Precinct 2 have accurate information they need to best understand the decisions made by their government during and in the wake of a disaster.

I expect a written response within 10 days of your receipt of this letter. Should you believe it will take longer to generate a response, please explain and provide a date by which you will respond.

Sincerely,

Adrian Garcia
Harris County Commissioner, Precinct 2

Cc:
State Senator Carol Alvarado
State Representative Mary Ann Perez
Congresswoman Sylvia Garcia, 29th District
Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, 18th District
Mayor Jerry Mouton, City of Deer Park
Mayor Louis Rigby, City of La Porte
Mayor Esmeralda Moya, City of Galena Park
Mayor Diaz, City of Jacinto City
Mayor Sylvester Turner, City of Houston