

Governor Gary Herbert
Utah State Capitol Complex
350 North State Street, Suite 200
PO Box 142220
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-2220

June 1, 2011

Mayor Ralph Becker
PO Box 145474
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-5474

Dear Governor Herbert and Mayor Becker,

A recently published study in one of the world's most respected medical journals validates concerns by Salt Lake City residents who were exposed to the Chevron Red Butte Creek oil spills that they may suffer future health consequences from that exposure.

The study, published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, demonstrated that oil spill workers from a 2002 oil spill showed evidence of adverse health impacts. To quote the authors' summary of the research, "Two years after participating in clean-up efforts of the Prestige oil spill (off the coast of Spain), exposed fishermen had increased prevalence rates of respiratory symptoms suggesting persistent airway injury. In addition, they had more structural chromosomal abnormalities in circulating lymphocytes. Our findings indicate that exposure to oil sediments, even for short periods, may have detrimental health effects." The type of chromosomal damage found in these workers is often used in environmental studies and is an early marker of genotoxicity that has been associated with an increased risk for cancer.

In using this information to assess what is appropriate follow up for these exposed workers the authors said, "Because the possibility of a higher risk for cancer in exposed workers cannot be excluded, a surveillance program in the target population would be appropriate. Follow-up studies to evaluate persistent respiratory health effects, chromosomal damage, and the development of cancer in these individuals for longer periods are currently under way."

In this study the definition of exposed worker was someone exposed for only four hours a day for 15 days. Some of these workers had the benefit of respirators, most were healthy young adults, the least vulnerable of all population subsets. Compared to healthy young adults children and fetuses are at much greater risk from oil related toxic inhalants like benzene and of course none of the SLC residents had the benefit of respirators during their involuntary exposure. Furthermore, the oil clean up during this study occurred in November and December when lower temperatures would have decreased the release of volatile organic compounds from the oil compared to circumstances during the SLC spill which occurred in June.

Although there is very limited medical research that parallels the exposure of SLC residents to the Chevron oil spills at Red Butte, what research exists suggests there is a reasonable possibility for short term and long term adverse health impacts to exposed residents. The possibility is certainly strong enough to justify insisting that Chevron provide the funds for a longitudinal

study of those residents who were most exposed in the first few days. This is especially true for the offspring of any women who were pregnant at the time of exposure or any children who were exposed.

Yet at this time there is no dedicated funding to administer a longitudinal health study on Salt Lake City residents exposed to the Chevron oil spills that have occurred twice in 2010. The medical expenses associated with testing the residents exposed to these spills may cost significant amounts of money over the next 10 to 20 years.

Therefore, we the undersigned medical professionals urge you to request that a fund be established of not less than \$2 million for the sole purpose of administering a longitudinal health study of residents exposed to Chevron's oil spills. It is of the utmost importance to the public interest that patients exposed to these spills be adequately cared for in the coming years and we believe Utah's elected officials have an important role to play in ensuring this occurs. We urge you to support us in this effort. It is the very least Chevron should do to compensate exposed residents. Furthermore, it is important to send a message to industry that accidents and missteps that risk public health will be taken seriously by our elected officials.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Dr. Samantha Ponder
Dr. Louis Borgenicht
Dr. Richard Kanner
Dr. Zell McGee
Dr. Gary Kunkel
Dr. Rebecca Ponder
Dr. David Crimin
Dr. Jacinda Sampson
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