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Citizens group mounts campaign to end hazardous air pollution from Valdez tanker terminal

The Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council is launching a public information campaign to persuade the chief executives of BP, ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips to cut the emissions of hazardous air pollution from the Alyeska tanker terminal in Valdez.

The information campaign starts Nov. 5 with a large 'open letter' ad in the Anchorage Daily News. The ad is addressed by name to Lord John Browne, CEO of BP; James Mulva, CEO of ConocoPhillips; and Rex Tillerson, CEO of ExxonMobil. It calls on the millionaire oilmen to personally intervene to give Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. the direction and funding to stop the toxic pollution. Alyeska is a non-profit consortium owned by BP, ConocoPhillips, ExxonMobil, and two minor North Slope oil producers.

The citizens' council has long sought an end to the pollution problem at the Valdez terminal, but the three oil companies have refused to give Alyeska the authority and funding for the necessary improvements.

"We citizens have repeatedly asked these big oil companies to take care of this situation, but their Alaska representatives have ignored us," said Stan Stephens, the council president. "Now we're trying to get Mr. Mulva, Mr. Tillerson, and Lord Browne to intervene personally."

The council's ad asks the oil executives to reduce the hazardous air pollution – including cancer-causing benzene – that their facility is producing in Valdez from current levels of 206 tons per year, according to an estimate by the EPA, to levels comparable with other major oil facilities in this country by the end of 2008. For example, a refinery in Benicia, California, that was owned until recently by ExxonMobil puts out less than a ton of hazardous air pollution annually. The council seeks a reduction to comparable levels at Valdez.

"We feel like we deserve clean air, the same as people in California," Stephens said.

In 2005, BP, ExxonMobil, and ConocoPhillips made profits of \$72.2 billion. According to figures from Alyeska, modifications costing \$91 million would reduce hazardous air pollution from the Ballast Water Treatment Facility to near zero after 2008. This sum would represent less than half a day of profit for BP, ExxonMobil, and ConocoPhillips.

"We've seen what happens when these companies put profits ahead of safety," Stephens said. "The result is disasters like the Exxon Valdez spill, the fire and explosion that killed fifteen people at BP's Texas refinery, BP's Prudhoe Bay shutdown this summer, and the Dalco Passage spill in Puget Sound. It's time these men put their talk about environmental stewardship into practice at their terminal in Valdez. With the profits they make, they can certainly afford it."

Subsequent components of the information campaign will include an ad in the Nov. 12 issue of Petroleum News, which is scheduled for distribution at the Resource Development Council conference Nov. 15-16 in Anchorage. The council also plans to produce video clips for posting on YouTube and radio spots to run on stations in Prince William Sound, the Kenai Peninsula, and Kodiak.

Additional information on the issue of air pollution at the Ballast Water Treatment Facility is available on the council web site at: <http://www.pwsrccac.org/newsroom/bwtfads.html>.

The Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council is an independent non-profit corporation whose mission is to promote environmentally safe operation of the Valdez Marine Terminal and the oil tankers that use it. The council's work is guided by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, and its contract with Alyeska Pipeline Service Company. The council's 18 member organizations are communities in the region affected by the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill, as well as aquaculture, commercial fishing, environmental, Native, recreation, and tourism groups.

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