

Senator Joe Biden on Chemical Safety & Security 2007 — 2005

1) Letter to Secretary Michael Chertoff, Dept. of Homeland Security (February 16, 2007)

“While section 550 does not authorize the Department to require implementation of safer technologies, the Department of Homeland Security should, at the bare minimum, encourage safer technologies that could reduce the risks to our citizens. If safer technologies can permanently eliminate the risk posed by a chemical plant, this step should be strongly considered. It will make America safer and allow the Department to utilize its scarce resources towards other vulnerabilities. In my view, eliminating risk, whenever possible, should be the highest priority for the Department, and your failure to take any meaningful step with your proposed regulation is short-sighted.”

2) Testimony Before the Senate Committee on the Environment & Public Works Hearing on Inherently Safer Technology in the Context of Chemical Site Security (June 21, 2006)

“If we simply required facilities that store or utilize large amounts of chlorine and other dangerous chemicals to transition to inherently safer technologies whenever it’s feasible, we could completely and permanently eliminate known threats in our communities. This would allow us to focus our scarce resources on border security and other critical infrastructure targets as well as allow our Federal, state, and local law enforcement and first responders to focus on other vulnerabilities.”

“I believe that requiring chemical facilities to transition to safer technologies whenever it is practical should be a priority that we establish. Doing this would completely and permanently eliminate the threat to millions of Americans.”

3) Press Release regarding S. 2855 Community Water Treatment Hazards Reduction Act of 2006 (May 19, 2006)

“This simple measure would have the immediate benefit of completely eliminating a known threat to nearly 50 million Americans, and it would also eliminate the single biggest reason for chlorine rail shipments through our communities.”

“These huge amounts of chlorine, stored in city centers and shipped across the country on our rails, represent a ticking time bomb. The 9-11 Commission recently found that the U.S. Government has failed to set priorities and has completely neglected our nation’s critical infrastructure. Now is the time to address the threat to our nation’s water facilities, before even one American falls victim to our failure to act.”

4) Senate floor statement introducing S. 2855 Community Water Treatment Hazards Reduction Act of 2006 (May 18, 2006)

“I rise today to introduce the Community Water Treatment Hazards Reduction Act of 2006 This legislation would completely eliminate a known security risk to millions of Americans across the United States by facilitating the transfer to safer technologies from deadly toxic chemicals at our nation’s water treatment facilities...The bottom line is that if we can eliminate a known-risk, we should. The legislation I am introducing today will do just that.”

5) Senate floor statement introducing the Hazardous Materials Vulnerability Reduction Act of 2005 (S.256) to require re-routing of hazardous chemicals (June 16, 2005)

“A Wall Street Journal article written last year – ‘Graffiti Artists Put Their Mark on War Against Terrorism’ – provides a chilling example of the exposure of these chemical tankers. The reporter followed a graffiti artist to a railroad tunnel along tracks that run near I-395 not far from where we stand. As he was conducting the interview, a tanker carrying dangerous chemicals rolled by on an adjacent track. The graffiti artist noted that ‘it wouldn’t be hard at all for someone like Al Qaeda to wait right here for the right poison and bang! Good-bye Washington.’

“The legislation that I am introducing requires the Department of Homeland Security to issue regulations establishing a national policy for dealing with the transport of the world’s most dangerous chemicals by rail through our high threat cities. It will require the Department to develop protocols for the notification of state and local officials...The bill also includes a provision requiring the Department of Homeland Security to work with state and local officials, the rail industry and other stakeholders to develop a strategy for re-routing a small fraction of the most dangerous materials around our most threatened city...

“...I will close by again referring to the grave warning set out in the study by the Naval Research Laboratory -- ‘over 100,000 people could be seriously harmed or even killed in the first half hour’ of an attack. The danger is simply too great to ignore, and I ask my colleagues to join me in passing this critical legislation.”