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Contact: Zach Cahalan
zcahalan@trucksafety.org
202-921-9526

Statement on Teutopolis, IL Ammonia Tanker-Trailer Crash

Joan Claybrook, Former Administrator, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and Chair, Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways: “This crash is a gruesome reminder of the grossly insufficient nature of hazardous-material truck safety requirements. It is unfathomable that 7,500 gallons of toxic chemicals are allowed to be inadequately transported on our highways alongside the motoring public. This must serve as a wake-up call to Secretary Buttigieg and the Department of Transportation to better regulate this dangerous industry.

Tami Friedrich, President, Truck Safety Coalition: “I lost my sister, brother-in-law, niece, and nephew in a tanker crash over thirty years ago. My loved ones were burned beyond recognition and up until this past Sunday, I thought there may not be a worse way to die. My heart aches for the families impacted by this horrific and unimaginable truck crash. They are not alone, and the Truck Safety Coalition is here to help.”

Zach Cahalan, Executive Director, Truck Safety Coalition: “Where’s the public demand for truck safety changes like we saw for the rail industry after the East Palestine crash? People just lost their lives on US Highways in a manner that was outlawed nearly 100 years ago after World War One. These crashes are preventable, not inevitable.

Shipping hazardous materials by truck presents is a substantial risk to the public. Since 2014, more than 18,000 highway incidents each year, on average, have involved hazardous materials.¹ Over the years from 1990 to 2021, there were 16 times more hazardous material related fatalities in total in truck

¹ <https://www.bts.gov/content/hazardous-materials-fatalities-injuries-accidents-and-property-damage-data>

transportation compared to rail.² In fact, around 1 million hazmat shipments occur every day, on average, moving more than 3.3 billion tons of hazardous material annually. Approximately double the ton miles of hazardous materials are moved by truck as compared to train.^{3,4}

Despite these facts, Congress is actively taking measures to make crashes more likely. The House and Senate respective Department of Transportation funding bills include various industry handouts, such as: prohibiting the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) from proceeding with speed limiter rulemaking, prohibiting FMCSA from implementing safety provisions for the teen trucking pilot program, and carve-outs allowing industry exemptions to avoid the use Electronic Logging Devices (ELDs).

Perilous deficiencies are already ubiquitous in the truck transportation of hazardous materials. This state of affairst is unacceptable, and policymakers must take necessary and urgent action to reverse course.

² <https://www.bts.gov/content/hazardous-materials-fatalities-injuries-accidents-and-property-damage-data>

³ <https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/training/hazmat/phmsas-quarterly-newsletter-hazardous-materials-safety-april-june-2022>

⁴ <https://www.bts.gov/browse-statistical-products-and-data/freight-facts-and-figures/hazardous-materials-shipments>