



Dear Neighbor,

We are sending you this letter to share information about our facility and the work we have been doing since we came to St. John the Baptist Parish just over two years ago. In that time, there has been a lot of misinformation spread in the community about our company and products, so we wanted to contact you directly and provide you with the facts.

Denka Performance Elastomer (DPE) makes Neoprene here in St. John Parish. Neoprene is a synthetic rubber used in various products including clothing, automotive parts, and military equipment. We employ about 250 people here. We make and use chloroprene, a necessary building block of Neoprene, as part of our process. Neoprene has been safely made in the United States since it was invented in 1930, and it has been made here at the LaPlace facility for nearly 50 years.

We purchased the Neoprene-producing portion of DuPont’s LaPlace facility in November 2015. Since then, DPE’s top priorities have been operating safely and responsibly so we can continue to provide good jobs to local residents and earn the trust of our neighbors. Over the past two years, we have worked very hard to achieve these goals.

For many years, the facility’s operations and emissions have been regulated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ). LDEQ regulations include an ambient air standard for chloroprene designed to protect public health that is still in effect today.

However, just one month after DPE purchased the LaPlace facility, the EPA released the 2015 National Air Toxics Assessment (NATA) report, which suggested the facility’s emissions created a high risk of two kinds of cancer in the community. That suggestion is based on incomplete information and inaccurate assumptions, and there is no evidence of the risk it describes.

Existing scientific assessments, including a long-term study that included workers from our LaPlace facility and health studies compiled by the state of Louisiana, clearly show there is no increased incidence of these cancers in St. John Parish. In addition, Louisiana’s leading health official has stated there is no risk from our facility after reviewing the Tumor Registry’s parish and the smaller census tract studies.

After we heard about the NATA report, we immediately began working with EPA to correct the report’s conclusions. We also recognized the report’s suggestions could create confusion and concern in the community. Because our neighbors’ peace of mind and safety are our top priorities, we also began working with LDEQ to see what we could do to further reduce emissions, despite these emissions being well below our permitted limits.

Together, we developed a voluntary plan to reduce our emissions by 85 percent and spent \$30 million implementing that plan. We made progress throughout the year and by the end of 2017, we had installed and started operation of the four main pieces of emissions-reduction equipment included in the agreement with the state. For more than a year EPA and DPE have also been monitoring ambient air concentration along our fenceline and throughout the community to assess our progress. Even though most of our new equipment has only been operating for a few months, we are already seeing significant reductions in the concentration of chloroprene measured in these samples.

We will continue to track the progress toward achieving our goal, and work to improve our processes to be as efficient as possible.

We want to thank you, the residents of our parish for your patience throughout this process. Though our company is new to this area, the facility is not, and many of our employees are longtime residents. We look forward to continuing to partner with our neighbors to provide good jobs and benefit the community.

We will keep you informed of our continuing progress.

Jorge Lavastida
Executive Officer and Plant Manager

Koki Tabuchi
President and CEO