

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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<http://oversight.house.gov>

February 6, 2020

The Honorable Andrew Wheeler
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Administrator Wheeler:

We request a formal investigation into the chemical release incident at the Detroit, Michigan facility of the Marathon Petroleum Corporation on Thursday, September 12, 2019.¹ While there are conflicting reports about what occurred, there is reason to believe that this incident may have endangered the health and safety of Marathon employees, first responders, and the surrounding communities.

On September 16, 2019, the Subcommittee on Environment held a field hearing in Detroit to address air and water quality in Michigan and explore how communities near the Marathon Refinery in Detroit are affected by chemical leaks. At this hearing, local residents told Subcommittee Members about serious concerns regarding the operations of the nearby Marathon Refinery and the negative health effects associated with Marathon's ongoing operations and release incidents.

According to reports, Marathon notified the Detroit Homeland Security and Emergency Management Office of a leak at 1:38 p.m., on Thursday, September 12, 2019. However, local residents were not notified until after the release event was allegedly resolved at approximately 2:35 p.m., almost an hour after Marathon notified the local Homeland Security and Emergency Management Office.² This recent incident underscores the need for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to take action to address chemical pollution and to safeguard the health and safety of Americans and our environment.

For the reasons stated above, we ask that EPA undertake a formal investigation and provide the following details to the Subcommittee by February 21, 2020:

¹ *Oil Vapor Leak Reported at Marathon Refinery in Southwest Detroit*, WXYZ Detroit (Sept. 13, 2019) (online at www.wxyz.com/news/oil-vapor-leak-reported-at-marathon-refinery-in-southwest-detroit).

² *Detroit Residents 'Demanding Accountability' After Oil Vapor Leak at Marathon Refinery*, WXYZ Detroit (Sept. 13, 2019) (online at www.wxyz.com/news/rashida-tlaib-detroit-residents-demanding-accountability-after-oil-vapor-leak-at-marathon-refinery); see also *Officials: Marathon Refinery Leak Poses No Public Danger*, Detroit Free Press (Sept. 12, 2019) (online at www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2019/09/12/leak-marathon-refinery-public-danger/2302982001/).

1. The timeline of events leading up to and following the September 12, 2019, leak incident, including:
 - a. Marathon's efforts to notify local, state, and federal agencies;
 - b. The reasons for the delay in notifying local residents of the incident;
 - c. Marathon's efforts to contain the leak, limit the impact on local air quality, and remedy other consequences of the leak; and
2. All communications regarding the leak between Marathon and EPA or the Michigan Department of Environmental Protection in September 2019;
3. An annotated list of all chemicals suspected to have been released from the Detroit Marathon Refinery on Thursday, September 12, 2019, including the following details:
 - a. all materials, including chemicals, released during the incident and the amounts of released materials;
 - b. results from all air monitoring; and
 - c. all health effects attributed to the leak incident, including injuries and hospitalizations; and
4. An explanation of whether there are any EPA requirements regarding the existence, timing, and substance of notice provided to communities after chemical leak incidents.

Chemical leaks pose significant risks to communities surrounding industrial sites like the Detroit Marathon Refinery. We hope the information you provide will help us better understand and address these impacts.

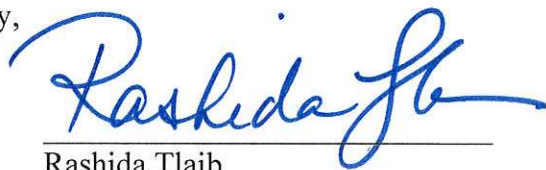
The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principle oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X.

If you have any questions, please call Committee staff at (202) 225-5051.



Harley Rouda
Chairman
Subcommittee on Environment

Sincerely,



Rashida Tlaib
Vice Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Environment

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Environment