

levels of ethylene oxide than were originally suggested. The levels recorded clearly exceed the safe level of ethylene oxide exposure set out in the EPA's Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) "Evaluation of the Inhalation Carcinogenicity of Ethylene Oxide" from late 2016. In fact, some of the EPA's readings from outside the Sterigenics facility were as high as 350 times the allowable threshold for ambient ethylene oxide. Still, the EPA has failed to act.

So, while I am glad that Governor Pritzker and the Illinois EPA issued an order to seal the Sterigenics plant in Willowbrook, I am disturbed that the U.S. EPA has failed to act with the urgency that the situation clearly demands. I am even more alarmed by the response the community received from Region 5 EPA leadership. From the beginning, Region 5 failed to provide an anxious public with the information they needed to understand the risks ethylene oxide emissions could pose to their families and our community's health and well-being.

At the same time that citizens in Willowbrook are living with the fear that their air and water may be carcinogenic, EPA enforcement, inspections, referrals to the Department of Justice, fines to polluters, and staffing levels have fallen to their lowest levels in decades. In Illinois, at the Region 5 office, staffing is down 10%, leaving fewer professionals to monitor facilities and determine when inspections are needed. If this decline in enforcement activities could be attributed to lower violations, that would be welcome. But we know that is simply not the case – take Sterigenics as Exhibit A.

Our community feels as though it were left in the dark by the U.S. EPA and our Region 5 Administrator throughout the crisis in Willowbrook. The effect of this has not just been a growing sense of panic around the ongoing ethylene oxide crisis, but a fundamental erosion of the trust that citizens in our community had placed in their EPA – a trust that will be hard to win back.

Despite all of this, I hope that we can work together, and I hope that trust can be earned back. The U.S. EPA can and ought to be a force for good in our community, in our country, and, by example, across the globe. The call for safe drinking water, clean air, clean water, and a safe climate shouldn't be partisan and cannot be up for debate. The EPA is staffed with lifetime public servants who are committed to this mission. I, too, admire and support that mission greatly and I will stand ready to work with you to uphold it.

Sincerely,



Sean Casten

Member of Congress