

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 30, 2019

Cathy Stepp  
Region 5 Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
77 West Jackson Blvd.  
Chicago, IL 60604-3590

Dear Administrator Stepp:

We write to urge the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to work closely with Watco Transloading—a company that recently received a notice of violation due to its high levels of manganese emission—to quickly come into compliance with the federal safety standards for this known neurotoxin. We also request that the EPA conduct both air and soil sampling for manganese contamination in residential communities downwind of Watco to ensure the area is not contaminated.

In May, we wrote a letter to the EPA requesting it use its authority under the Clean Air Act to require industrial facilities to install filter-based monitors that measure possible manganese emissions in Southeast Chicago. Since then, new monitors have detected dangerously high levels of manganese in September and October, with the federal response to these violations eventually issued on December 18. The community was not immediately informed about the high concentrations of manganese measured near the facility, leaving residents in the dark about the manganese concentrations in the air that they breathe. Manganese emissions pose a serious threat to our constituents, as exposure can lead to neurological effects, learning difficulties, memory loss, and lower child IQ scores.

In addition to air pollution, the risk of soil contamination from manganese-emitting facilities is also of deep concern. Recent testing has shown that manganese levels in soil near the S.H. Bell facility have exceeded the Illinois standard for the required cleanup of former residential and industrial sites. Due to the risk of soil contamination from manganese emissions at Watco, areas downwind of the facility should be also be monitored for soil contamination.

It is unacceptable for our constituents to be exposed to this pollution that may threaten the health of the Southeast Chicago community. We demand that those responsible be held accountable for meeting the federal air pollution standards as quickly as possible, to mitigate any further harm to the community.

We look forward to your prompt response on this matter.

Sincerely,



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Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



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Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator