

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 8, 2020

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

Dear Administrator Stepp:

We write to express our concerns over ongoing water pollution discharges of dangerous chemicals such as cyanide and ammonia from the ArcelorMittal Burns Harbor facility in Indiana. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) must use its full authority to ensure the facility is held accountable for any violations to the Clean Water Act and harm to the local community, the Indiana Dunes National Park, and the Great Lakes. Given the facility's repeated violations, your agency should strengthen the current permit to require stricter testing, inspection, and emissions limits.

In August 2019, after a blast furnace wastewater failure, the Burns Harbor facility released cyanide and ammonia into the Little Calumet River and Lake Michigan, killing 3,000 fish, causing delays to the operations at a water treatment plant, and closing two beaches. Disturbingly, the company failed to immediately inform public officials of this toxic spill. Since then, the facility has been required to perform daily testing of these chemicals and report to the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM).

However, recent articles by the *Chicago Tribune* and *CBS Chicago* reports that ArcelorMittal manipulated water tests and that unacceptable levels of cyanide and ammonia were found in the water discharged from the plant. This is unacceptable. If ArcelorMittal is found to have manipulated its water tests in order to conceal violations, it must be held accountable.

In order to protect the public health and our environment, it is crucial that this required daily testing is not manipulated and reported accurately. To this end, EPA and IDEM should impose additional inspection requirements and a lower emissions standard for the facility. In addition, IDEM should conduct a full investigation to ensure the Burns Harbor facility is complying with all environmental regulations.

Those who depend on the critical ecosystems in Lake Michigan should be confident that the EPA will use its authority to protect the quality of the Great Lakes, the National Park, and our rivers as well as hold companies accountable for their pollution.

We urge the U.S. EPA to work with the IDEM to initiate appropriate enforcement actions, and to use its full authority to protect the public health and the environment from dangerous pollutant discharges from ArcelorMittal. We also urge the EPA to use its authority to ensure proper tests are conducted and validated moving forward—as those of us who value Lake Michigan and the watershed it is a part of are counting on it.

Sincerely,



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Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



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Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator

CC: Andrew Wheeler, Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency