

**Statement of  
Congressman Curt Weldon (1987-2007)**

**Before the  
House Committee on Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness  
Of the  
House of Representatives  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Stephen Barrar – Chair    Chris Sainato – Democrat Chair**

**Regarding  
Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and the Ramifications  
for the  
Railway Transportation of Crude Oil Across the Commonwealth**

**March 5, 2014  
Delaware County, Pennsylvania**

Mr. Chairman, thank you for inviting me to testify today on public safety matters of extreme importance to the people of Delaware County, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Mid-Atlantic Region and the entire United States. My testimony is offered as the former 20 year Representative in the US Congress from Pennsylvania, Member and Chairman of the Delaware County Council and Mayor of Marcus Hook. My perspectives are also offered as Founder/Chairman of the Congressional Fire/EMS/Disaster Caucus and Institute in Congress for 20 years. The Caucus and CFSI provided the impetus for creation of the Pennsylvania Fire Services Institute. Perhaps, most importantly, my perspectives are offered as a former Pennsylvania State Fire Instructor and Volunteer Fire Chief in Marcus Hook who had to deal with two of the largest petroleum related waterfront incidents in the history of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the nation – incidents that we were told would never happen!

I must first commend the leadership of this Committee on matters relating to First Responders in Pennsylvania. Our state enjoys one of the largest numbers of fire departments in the nation – most of which are volunteer. Your leadership and concern for our First Responders has not gone unnoticed. I especially acknowledge and commend my friends Chairman Steve Barrar and Joe Hackett for their ongoing involvement with our local First Responders. I would take this opportunity to encourage every Member of the Pennsylvania Legislature to join the Chairmen and support the Pennsylvania Fire Services Institute and also attend the ongoing briefings and updates as well as attend the annual dinner in Harrisburg. Likewise, I encourage every Member of our State Congressional Delegation to add their names to the Membership of the Congressional Fire & EMS Caucus in Washington, DC. The Congressional Fire Services Caucus remains the largest bi-partisan Caucus in the United States Congress and celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary last May in DC with over 2000 attendees. As always, the fire service of Pennsylvania provided one of the largest groups of attendees at the dinner and three day meetings and seminars.

The Congressional Fire Services Caucus and Institute served as the catalyst for creation of the Pennsylvania Fire Services Institute and similar state-based organizations throughout the United States. Our success in meeting the needs of First Responders to deal with unforeseen emergencies has been dramatic at the national and statewide level – especially in Pennsylvania. In May, based on our

success in Pennsylvania and in Washington, DC, I will roll out 'One World for Life", at the World Economic Forum in Astana, Kazakhstan creating an international network and NGO that intends to change the paradigm regarding disasters worldwide.

The citizens of Pennsylvania have always enjoyed one of the most dedicated, well trained and well equipped first responder networks in America. However, time and again incidents have occurred for which we could never have been totally prepared. I had first-hand operational responsibility in two of these incidents – the collision of two petroleum carrying tankers at the dock of the former British Petroleum Refinery (now Monroe Energy) and the overfilling of one of 5 man-made underground caverns under the Marcus Hook Sunoco Refinery (now Sunoco Logistics).

The Corinthos/Edgar M Queeny Ship Collision was the largest single disaster in the United States at the time and resulted in 29 deaths and hundreds of millions of dollars of property damage. The fire burned out of control for 3 days and was totally handled by volunteers from over 60 fire departments. The product that exploded and burned out of control was light crude. I ask permission to enter the technical book that I co-authored as a part of the Record. Years later, it is sad to report that several of the recommendations made as a result of the Corinthos incident have not been fully implemented. Prior to the Corinthos Disaster, no one believed that an incident of this magnitude could ever occur in United States inland waters, let alone in a community with a population of less than 5000 people.

At the time of the Sunoco Underground Cavern overfill, no State or Federal Standards existed for such massive underground storage facilities. As Fire Chief and Mayor at the time of the incident, I had no help available from the State or Federal Government and yet had to evacuate 60 families from their homes for a period that lasted 3 months. Thankfully, no injuries occurred from this traumatic incident. Many in my community implored me to "shut down the refinery" and block refinery entrances with fire apparatus. Hundreds, if not thousands, of workers employed in and related to refinery operations would have suffered extreme economic hardships. Instead, we assembled a cooperative

citizen/business/labor/government/NGO network to prepare for possible future occurrences. Prior to the overfilling of one of the five man-made Underground Caverns in Marcus Hook, no one believed that a quality energy company like Sunoco could ever allow extremely flammable gas to be forced from an underground storage cavern into the basements of dozens of ordinary homeowners.

Our State and Region has been subjected to so many disasters over the years that an Exhibit has been assembled and is currently showing at the Independence Seaport Museum in Philadelphia that focuses on 'Disasters on the Delaware'. Throughout the years, we were always told that such incidents could never occur, that industry had all of the answers and not to worry.

Since those days as Fire Chief and Mayor, I have travelled to every state to witness response to similar disasters within hours of their occurrence. Rail car fires, bleves (boiling liquid expanding vapor explosions, HazMats and massive leaks occur every year in the United States, often in communities as small as Marcus Hook with less than 5000 citizens. In every incident the courage and abilities of First Responders has been unquestioned, but the tools, education, training and preparation have not always been sufficient. And, unfortunately, the number of active volunteer firefighters has been on a steady decline in Pennsylvania as well as across the nation adding to our concerns.

Let me make it clear that I personally support the energy initiatives currently underway in the Commonwealth. I support the Commonwealth's leadership on the Marcellus Shale Initiative and can tell you that the economic benefits to Pennsylvania's citizens will be positive. As I have travelled and met with Leaders in over 40 nations since leaving Congress, there is unparalleled interest in this effort as the world recognizes that Pennsylvania is leading America to energy independence and stability for all of our citizens. In my opinion, we must move forward and support Marcellus Shale and related energy initiatives already underway and planned.

However, let me caution you that industry must be put on notice to fully engage with local officials and First Responders of the Commonwealth. A well thought out

and detailed emergency response implementation strategy and plan must be developed that identifies rail supply lines, storage and filling sites, operational locations as well as realistic response plans that take into consideration cutbacks that have occurred in both volunteer and paid professional emergency responder staffs as well as cutbacks in training and required containment resources.

When I was a local Fire Chief and Mayor, full time industrial and refinery based fire and emergency responders were well staffed and well equipped. And while emergency response leaders of several of these facilities remain personal friends of mine, there is absolutely no doubt that staffing, resources and training have been cut back dramatically inside of these emerging re-aligned energy facilities. In addition, as rail cars pass from plant to plant and storage facility to storage facility, multiple jurisdictions are exposed to potential incidents which must be properly observed and managed with absolute coordination.

Three months ago, a Texas based national industrial fire and risk management corporation approached me regarding a serious proposal to establish a full time regional protection and response service for transportation, storage and operations associated with the energy growth initiatives in our State. Enjoying solid local support and offering to collaborate aggressively with locally based First Responders, this group should be provided every possible support from the Commonwealth. My understanding is that they have already announced a plan to relocate their Headquarters from Texas to Pennsylvania. The Governor and Legislature should establish a Special Task Force to work with this 'one of a kind' opportunity for the Commonwealth as well as to provide a template for the nation.

As a result of this initial interest, I prepared a concept paper for the creation of an International Homeland Security Research, Response and Training Center in Pennsylvania. As the former Vice Chairman of the Congressional Homeland Security and Armed Services Committees and still serving on a Congressional Advisory Panel, no such comprehensive Center exists in the United States at this time. Pennsylvania should take the lead for the nation in this regard as well. First Responders worldwide would flock to Pennsylvania to receive 'state of the art'

training in rail car transit safety as well as the broader concerns related to all petro-chemical installations.

During this Hearing, and at a similar Hearing being held today before the House Congressional Transportation Committee in Washington DC under the leadership of my good friend and Pennsylvanian Chairman Bill Shuster, you will hear industry witnesses testify that the threat is manageable and that response plans are adequate. I urge you in the strongest possible terms to critically evaluate every detail of planning and operation utilizing Pennsylvania property, rail lines and roadways. Make no mistake, an incident involving rail transport of oil will occur in the Commonwealth, and lives (including First Responders) and property will be put at risk. These incidents have occurred in the past and they will occur in the future.

As a supporter of our energy industry's plans to expand energy production and operations, I cannot overstate the importance of the Commonwealth establishing and enforcing standards and ensuring support for aggressive First Response. I also encourage the Commonwealth to demand adequate support from the US DOT in every possible way. The Commonwealth should immediately petition the DOT Office of Pipeline Safety for an unsolicited grant to allow the Commonwealth to create a Comprehensive Emergency Response Template that can be used not only to protect the citizens of our State but to also provide a model for the nation.

The focus on energy growth in Pennsylvania must be matched with guaranteed protection for the safety and well-being of our citizens and First Responders.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today.

International Homeland Security Research, Response and Training Center

At Marcus Hook, Pennsylvania

Conceptualization by Congressman Curt Weldon (1987-2007)

**Challenge** – In today's difficult and challenging world, there is a need for a working operations center designed to focus on all aspects of Homeland Security, including basic and applied research, training and development of new technologies. In the Northeast Industrial and Technology SMART Region Corridor (PA, DE, MD, NJ) there is a need for a full 24/7 Homeland Security Operations Center that can also prepare, preplan and provide Emergency Operations Leadership and Response for any incident including industrial, petrochemical, manufacturing, transportation, infrastructure, maritime and residential. This unique Marcus Hook EOC (Emergency Operations Center) will also serve as a template for integration and coordination of Homeland Security assets for any region (especially complex industrial) in the United States and worldwide.

**Site** – Marcus Hook is being proposed for this massive undertaking because of its strategic location at the Apex of the New York to Washington, DC Megalopolis, its historical location for heavy petrochemical and manufacturing operations, its history involving some of the most challenging and complex disasters including the Corinthos/Queeny Ship Collision, the Sun Oil Underground LNG Leakage incident and numerous other complex incidents threatening devastation and loss of life, as well as its proximity to academic institutions with existing programs involving Homeland Security. Marcus Hook also is the site of a uniquely well-equipped and well qualified fully volunteer emergency response capability and an existing vacant industrial complex that may be suitable for an international complex for Homeland Security research, training and response.

**Leadership** – A public/private partnership has been created and is being led by CEO/Owner Bob Andrews of the Bob Andrews Group of Companies ([www.bobandrewsgroup.com](http://www.bobandrewsgroup.com)). Bob Andrews and the Bob Andrews are recognized as one of the leading disaster planning and response organizations in the US and worldwide. Congressman Curt Weldon was born in Marcus Hook and served as local Fire Chief, Mayor, County Council Chairman and Congressman for 20 years. Weldon also conceptualized, developed and Co-Chaired the Congressional Fire/EMS/Disaster Caucus which recently celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and remains the largest bi-partisan Caucus in the Congress to this day. Because of his efforts and the creation and passage of the historic FIRE Act, Weldon became known as 'America's Fire Chief'. A Team of local, regional, national and international experts and investors is being assembled to complete necessary due diligence and initial phase in of planning and development.

**Infrastructure** – The former site of the American Viscose/FMC Corporation Plant in Marcus Hook is the focus of an in-depth study regarding potential re-use of this site for renovation and reconstruction. Specific focus will be on the former Primary Administrative Complex and Auditorium Building, the Primary Brick Office Building as well as the rail spurs, open areas and related space for use as a Homeland Security training and research complex.

**Marcus Hook EOC** – An immediate commitment will be made to establish an integrated paid fire and disaster operations center that would build on the existing capabilities in Marcus Hook and add a full-time staff of approximately 24 paid professionals providing 24/7 emergency operations services for the existing areas of protection as well as refineries, manufacturing plants and transportation networks within the SMART Region and especially along the Delaware River. The paid staff would largely be taken from the forces of the existing volunteer network with a unique housing and university collaboration

established to enhance and entice volunteer members and creation of a Homeland Security Career Development Initiative with neighboring institutions including Neumann and Widener.

**Short-term Objectives –**

Completion of site assessment of FMC Complex with special focus on the two largest Administration buildings of the former American Viscose Plant.

Establish a working public/private working group to plan the phase-in of full time professional staff through the existing fire and EMS networks

Identify public, philanthropic and private investment dollars that can be brought to the initiative

**Long-term Objectives –**

Marcus Hook EOC creating up to 24 paid positions to lead the Center supplemented with part-paid and existing and new volunteer core, including a university centered career element

Identify and lock in corporate and institutional partners within the SMART Region

Design and develop a re-use and housing strategy for the existing two identified buildings

Identify and establish Homeland Security Research, Training and Response Capabilities that will be centered in the Marcus Hook EOC, with special focus on –

Fire and Disasters in Petrochemical Operations

Fire and Disasters in Manufacturing Operations

Transportation Safety and Disaster and Response

Maritime Safety and Disaster Response

Institutional Safety and Disaster Response

Identify and establish a Homeland Security Research and Manufacturing Campus providing new employment for local area residents

Tracked Vehicle Initiative

Remote Firefighting Apparatus

Cutting edge Suppression Technologies and Agents

**Nest Steps –**

Orientation to Marcus Hook Stakeholders

Mayor and Council in Marcus Hook, Trainer and Lower Chichester

Local Fire/EMS

Local Industry

Orientation to Regional Stakeholders

Senator Pileggi & State Officials

County Council and related Departments

Existing Regional Planning and Response Networks

Orientation to National and International Stakeholders



Department of Homeland Security

FEMA

US Fire Administration

HUD Urban Development

International Fire/EMS/Disaster Organizations and Networks

Complete legal structures (Profit and Non-Profit) to commence immediate operations (by 1/1/14)

Develop Milestone based EOC Implementation Plan