June 25, 2013

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chairwoman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC  20510

Dear Chairwoman Boxer:

I’m writing to you because several recent tragic accidents have raised the profile of the safe operation of chemical facilities. For the American Chemistry Council (ACC) and its member companies, nothing is more important than the safety and security of our employees, our contractors and the people who live and work around our operations.

The men and women of the chemical industry have worked hard to develop a culture that has put our industry at the forefront of manufacturing when it comes to safety. We are very proud of the fact that the worker injury rate for the chemical sector is among the lowest of any manufacturing sector according to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

And, members of ACC have sought to build upon the overall industry’s safety performance through Responsible Care®, the chemical industry’s world-class environmental, health, safety and security performance initiative. Under Responsible Care, ACC members work with emergency responders and communities to coordinate response plans and to continually improve industry performance.

The results of the program speak for themselves. Responsible Care companies have reduced injury and illness rates at their facilities by 79 percent since 1990. Thanks to this effort, these same companies have a worker injury rate five times lower than the U.S. manufacturing sector as a whole and nearly three times better than the business of chemistry overall. They also have reduced the number of safety incidents that resulted in a product spill, fire, explosion or injury by 58 percent since 1995.
While this has led to a strong performance record, ACC and its members know that we must not stop there. Safety demands continuous improvement. To help make that happen, ACC and its members developed the Responsible Care Process Safety Code to serve as the industry’s collective commitment to safety throughout our chemical processing operations, management systems and leadership. The Process Safety Code requires companies to develop and implement a comprehensive process safety management system to manage risk and seek opportunities to improve performance. Companies must understand and prioritize process safety risks and see that all employees have the required knowledge, expertise, tools and training to manage process risks in their operations. Implementation of the Process Safety Code is mandatory for all ACC member and partner companies.

In addition to industry efforts, the safety of employees and communities requires a strong ongoing partnership between industry and government. That is why ACC and its members work closely with government officials, including Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Chemical Safety Board (CSB) and other industry organizations, to continually look for ways to enhance safety by improving the effectiveness of regulations, as well as look for better ways to share best practices and lessons learned.

We support the numerous federal programs in place that regulate the safe operation of chemical facilities and believe that agencies should have the appropriate resources to effectively enforce regulations. We believe individual companies have an obligation to understand which laws and regulations they are subject to and take appropriate action to comply.

ACC and its members remain committed to working with government officials and industry organizations to enhance safety, so we can continue to provide the essential benefits of chemistry to society and expand chemical production here in the United States.

We appreciate your interest in this important issue, and please let us know if we can provide any additional information you might need.

Sincerely,

Cal Dooley