

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4307

April 3, 2019

Toby Baker
Executive Director
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
12100 Park 35 Circle
Austin, TX 78753

Dear Mr. Baker,

We are writing you today seeking clarification regarding an issue relating to Texas Commission on Environmental Quality's response to the Intercontinental Terminals Company (ITC) fire. It has come to our attention that the nearest ambient monitoring station to the incident was offline for a significant duration of the fire.

It is our understanding that the TCEQ ambient monitoring station at Houston Deer Park (CAMS 35) experienced operational issues on March 11 before the fire at ITC broke out. A TCEQ contractor performed repairs that were completed by March 16. Ambient data collection resumed the day before the fire started. Even though the station collected data throughout the day Sunday during the fire, scheduled maintenance went forward on Monday, March 18 and was not delayed as a result of the fire.

The sensor was offline at 6:00am CST and did not resume ambient data collection until 1:00pm that afternoon, a period of seven hours where important public health data was not collected. During this period, it is our understanding that TCEQ did not bring in a mobile sensor to replace the sensor which was undergoing maintenance.

We have concerns about how public health decisions were being made in this timeframe and would like answers to the following questions:

1. Did TCEQ monitor ambient data during this time frame?
2. Why was routinely scheduled maintenance not delayed during an active incident?
3. If maintenance could not be delayed, why was a mobile sensor not brought in during the timeframe when the monitoring station was down?

Texans rely on TCEQ to provide adequate scientific information during ongoing incidents. The public health recommendations provided in coordination with local officials are essential to ensuring the safety of people throughout the greater Houston area. It is of the utmost importance that state agencies continue to supply the most accurate data so that the public can have full confidence in recommendations provided by local and state authorities.

We request you get back to us with answers to these questions in the next three weeks with all due consideration.

Sincerely,



Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress



Sylvia Garcia
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress