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Foundation Ethics & Economics

**Foundation Conference** ■ November 21, 2009

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**Dossier on the bestowal of the international ethecon  
Negative Prize „Black Planet Award 2009“ on the Wang  
family, CEO Lee Chih-tsuen and other senior executives  
of the multinational chemistry company FORMOSA  
PLASTICS GROUP/ Taiwan**

The international ethecon prize „Black Planet Award 2009“ publically exposes and condemns the family of the late founder Wang Yung-ching as well as CEO Lee Chih-tsuen and other senior executives of the multinational chemistry conglomerate FORMOSA PLASTICS GROUP of Taiwan.





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## **Dossier on the Wang family, CEO Lee Chih-tsuen and other senior executives of the FORMOSA PLASTICS GROUP**

### **History and Operation of FORMOSA PLASTICS GROUP and its senior executives**

The origins of FORMOSA PLASTIC GROUP (FPG) date back to the time of anticommunism and the Cold War. The original company was established in 1954 on the island state of Taiwan<sup>1</sup>. Taiwan itself had been founded as a sovereign state, separated from mainland China, by the infamous Chiang Kai-shek, who had ignored international law in doing so. It is an obvious provocation toward the People's Republic of China that the very titles of FPG and its most important subsidiaries<sup>2</sup> carry the name formerly used by colonial powers for the island – Formosa. These titles also refer to a connection not readily acknowledged: company founder Wang Yung-ching, profited highly from rightist and anti-communist Kuomintang incidents and massacres at the end of and after World War II, incidents which the USA had in its own interest tolerated and supported. It follows that FPG was therefore indirectly founded with US-American money.<sup>3</sup> At the time of his death in 2008 Wang was one of the richest men in the world, his fortune amounting to 6,8 billion US dollars.

Today FORMOSA PLASTICS GROUP has a sales volume of 66 Billion US Dollars and 94 thousand employees (2008) and is one of the foremost worldwide conglomerates. According to its annual financial report, FPG consists of several dozen companies in Taiwan, China, Vietnam and other countries, including companies in the U.S.A. In Taiwan three of the ten largest firms

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<sup>1</sup> After the defeat of Japan in 1945 Taiwan was incorporated into what was then the Republic of China under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek and in accordance with the allied war goals as stated in the Cairo Declaration. At the same time, the civil war between the ruling (ROC) Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang - KMT) and the Chinese communists flared up once again. At first the Taiwanese enthusiastically welcomed the ROC troops, however the omnipresent corruption, galloping inflation and economic break-down quickly lead to tensions between the Taiwanese people and the administration installed by the Kuomintang government. These tensions erupted into a rebellion known as the 228 Incident of February 28, 1947, which was violently suppressed by the Kuomintang. After her defeat in the Chinese Civil War in 1949, the Kuomintang Government under Chiang Kai-shek left mainland China completely and fled to Taiwan. Today only 23 nations maintain diplomatic relations with Taiwan. (Wikipedia / ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/228\\_Incident](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/228_Incident) / <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taiwan>))

<sup>2</sup> Among others the following companies belong to the FORMOSA PLASTICS GROUP (cf. et al. [www.fpg.com](http://www.fpg.com)): Chang Gung Biotechnology Corp., Formosa Asahi Spandex Co. Ltd., Formosa Automobile Corp., Formosa Chemical & Fiber Corp., Formosa Daikin Advanced Chemicals Co. Ltd., Formosa Heavy Industries Corp., Formosa Komatsu Silicon Corp., Formosa Petrochemical Corp., Formosa Plasma Display Corp., Formosa Plastics Corp., Formosa Plastics Maritime Corp., Formosa Taffeta Corp., Formosa Technology Corp., Formosa Teletek Corp., Formosa Transport Corp., Hwa Ya Power Corp., Inotera Memories Inc., Mailiao Power Corp., MIZ Port Management Corp., Nan YA Plastics Corp., Nan Ya Printed Circuit Board Corp., Nan Ya Technology Corp., PFG Fiber Glass Corp., Tah Shi Spinning Corp., Weng Fun Industrial Co., VIA Technologies

<sup>3</sup> The New York Times from 17.10.2008 - <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/17/business/17wang.html>



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listed on the Taipei stock exchange belong to the concern. Key fields of operation are chemistry, bio-technology, electronic components, cosmetics, household chemical products, automobile parts and pharmaceuticals.

Experience shows that on the whole official annual reports give an incomplete picture of the true size of a multi-national concern. This is due to the fact that there are no existing instruments to oversee and control multi-national economic structures. And even national control systems fail, due to the economic power of the transnational companies. As a rule, hidden behind the financial information published in the reports there exists an at least equally large black imperium, to which belong, for example, companies which are officially independent, but whose products are purchased solely by one buyer, putting their products and production essentially under the control of this company.

Although many of the concerns belonging to FORMOSA PLASTICS GROUP are listed on the Taiwan stock exchange, it is difficult to find information about them. Here Asian discretion is linked with the wish to disclose as little as possible about the company's ploys. All the more so as the imperium has always been ruled in a strictly patriarchal fashion, first by the founder Wang Yung-ching and, after his death, by other family members and the CEO Lee Chih-tsuen, who was designated by Wang Yung-ching himself.

The history of the FORMOSA PLASTICS GROUP has been accompanied by a continuous stream of social and ecological crimes of global dimensions. Examples are:

- > The PVC scandal, which runs throughout the history of the company.<sup>4</sup> PVC belongs to the group of chlorine chemicals which have been internationally ostracised since the beginning

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<sup>4</sup> Two highly explosive and toxic gases, vinylchloride and ethylendichloride, are used in the production of PVC. The colorless and easily inflammable gas vinylchloride produces PVC through a chemical reaction with light, air and heat. When burned it creates hydrogen chloride, traces of the nerve gas phosgene, which was used as a biological warfare agent during World War II, and the infamous dioxin, the most dangerous of all chemical toxins. The toxic properties of vinylchloride were first discovered in the 1960s. Before that it was classified only as a numbing agent and an eye irritant. Its more extensive toxic effects on humans were discovered at the beginning of the 1970s. Vinylchloride effects the liver, esophagus and spleen as well as the circulation of the hands, hand bones and skin. It is also classified as a carcinogen. Ethylendichloride, also a colorless, inflammable and toxic gas with a chlorine-like odour, poses a great danger as well. Ethylendichloride is skin-irritating, numbing, mutagenic, carcinogenic and causes damage to the liver, kidneys and blood. In addition, it can increase the incidence of premature and still births. Internally it causes poisoning when swallowed. When burned, it may produce dangerous and



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of the 1980's due to their extremely dangerous consequences for human health and the environment. Although these dangers to the ecology of the planet became increasingly well-known throughout the world, they were never an inducement to the company to stop production. On the contrary, in a downright cynical fashion, the company misused the growing ecological insight concerning PVC production and products to increase its own profits and became one of the world-wide largest producers of PVC products. It even ignored the production ban imposed by the Taiwanese government and simply transferred the production to countries where production bans do not exist.

- > The concern destroys the environment and endangers human health in the vicinity of its plants throughout the world. One example is Point Comfort in Texas where inspections disclosed a high concentration of ethylendichloride (EDC) in the ground water and water storage tanks. The soil and waterways near PGG Industries, which is responsible for the disposal of part of FORMOSA's EDC wastes in Texas, are also contaminated.
- > The OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) and the CSB (Chemical Safety Board) regularly criticize the faulty handling of toxic materials, which has been the cause of innumerable cases of drinking water pollution. 54 cases of drinking water contamination in the USA by FORMOSA were recorded in 1990 alone.<sup>5</sup>
- > Public authorities persistantly condemn the fact that the company ignores all ordinances in regard to the handling of easily inflammable agents. Maintenance and repairs are not carried out correctly.<sup>6</sup>
- > Numerous cases of toxic substance emission are on record in the USA. Some of them in large amounts, as in the 1980s, when 63 tons of ethylendichloride leaked out into a residential area in Texas.<sup>7</sup>

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incontrollable gases. The substance is a pollutant and class 3 water hazard. Ethylendichloride is used in the production of vinylchloride as well as in paint removers, leaded gasoline and solvents for resins and asphalts.

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.osha.gov/pls/osaweb/owares.do\\_search/](http://www.osha.gov/pls/osaweb/owares.do_search/) <http://www.csb.gov/newsroom/detail.aspx?nid=173>

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*



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- > Fatalities and severe injuries are repeatedly reported. In 1997 two workers suffocated from an ethylendichloride leakage in the USA. There was another incident involving this substance in 1998. 26 employees were injured in an explosion in Texas. In 2004 an explosion in the Illinois factory killed six workers and injured several others. The last severe incident in the USA occurred in October 2005, when eleven employees were severely injured.
- > People living near the FORMOSA PLASTICS GROUP factories face constant danger. During the explosions the blast waves shattered windows for miles around. The soil, air and water are polluted around the production sites. During the explosion in the Illinois factory communities in the surrounding area had to be completely evacuated.
- > In 1998 FORMOSA PLASTICS tried to dump 3,000 tons of toxic waste into the sea close to the Cambodian seaport of Sihanoukville. Even today the people of Cambodia suffer under the toxic wastes emitted by FPG.
- > In 2000 FORMOSA had to pay the State of Texas 150,000 US dollars in fines for the violation of air pollution limits.<sup>8</sup>
- > In January 2009 scientists in Texas measured an increased level of toxic substances in the air and soil near the FORMOSA plants. Farmers noted changes in the environment and in animals, changes which were brought about by the cancer-producing and DNA-destructive substances in the toxic emissions. Bulls lost weight, cows bore three-legged calves and still births and miscarriages among farm animals occurred more and more often, but FORMOSA refused to accept any blame. A study concerning the cattle poisonings published by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) listed 43 toxic substances emitted from the factories. Many of these substances are known to be carcinogenic.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> [www.environmentalhealthnews.org/ehs/toxic-home-on-the-range](http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/ehs/toxic-home-on-the-range)

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*



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- > Reacting to the extreme water, air and soil pollution, the American EPA and the US Department of Justice sentenced FPG to a fine of 13 million US dollars on September 30, 2009. The fine payment must be used for the reduction of air pollution.
- > In the USA Formosa Plastics workers have joined forces by founding the organisation "Injured Workers United". In reaction to their own experiences and the severe illnesses attributed to the working conditions at FORMOSA plants, these workers decided to publically accuse FORMOSA PLASTICS GROUP in an open letter.
- > The company is on the list of the top 10 polluters in Taiwan. 25 Prozent of all greenhouse gases produced in Taiwan can be attributed to FPG.

The attitude of the responsible executives of FORMOSA PLASTICS GROUP towards law and order, towards ecology and peace, towards social and human rights as well as towards production security and environmental protection is revealed by an example from the state of Delaware in the US. Because public authorities were unable to deliver legal restraints in person, they found it necessary to drop the documents from a helicopter! Neither has the endless list of fines of up to one million dollars lead to a change of attitude.

Although there have been repeated demonstrations against FPG in Taiwan and other countries, the executives responsible for company policy have refused to be influenced by these massive protests.

Because of the extent of its environmental crimes, even the US-American trade association for the chemical industry, the American Chemical Society, denies FPG its cooperation.

It is FPG's owners and senior executives who are accountable for the policies and operations of the firm. They are the ones responsible for the social and ecological crimes committed by the company.

Today the corporation is run by members of the founder's family and by CEO Lee Chih-tsuen, who was personally installed by the late founder, Wang Yung-ching. The family consists



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of Wang Yung-ching's widow, two sons, seven daughters, his four sisters and one brother. The family is one of the richest clans on the planet, their assets being estimated at up to 70 billion Euros. They are responsible for a large-scale ruin of human health and ecological destruction, even for the death of numerous people. They act solely for their own personal gain and recklessly accept the fact that their policies may very well lead to the annihilation of the planet as the „Black Planet“.

For this outstanding demonstration of contempt toward ethics and morals „ethecon - Foundation Ethics and Economics“ dishonors the Wang family, the CEO of FORMOSA PLASTICS GROUP, Lee Chih-tsuen, and the senior executives of the conglomerate through the bestowal of the „Black Planet Award 2009“. With their dealings, they pose not only a threat to peace and human rights, but also to democracy, ecology and humanity as a whole.

Together with activists from all parts of the world, the foundation will present the international ethecon negative prize „Black Planet Award 2009“ to the above named executives of FORMOSA PLASTICS GROUP at their headquarters in Taipeh, Taiwan.



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### **Selected NGOs concerned with FPG**

- > Basel Action Network  
122 S. Jackson Street, Suite 320  
Seattle, WA 98104  
USA  
Telefon 1-206-652-5555  
Fax 1-206-652-5750  
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Internet [www.ban.org](http://www.ban.org)
  
- > Center for Health, Environment and Justice  
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Internet [www.chej.org](http://www.chej.org) / [www.besafenet.com/pvc](http://www.besafenet.com/pvc)  
Twitter [www.twitter.com/chej](http://www.twitter.com/chej)  
Facebook [www.facebook.com/CHEJfans](http://www.facebook.com/CHEJfans)
  
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### **Selected Internet links**

<http://www.coking.com/forum/tm.asp?m=450>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Formosa\\_Plastics\\_Group](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Formosa_Plastics_Group)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Formosa\\_Plastics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Formosa_Plastics)

[http://www.fpg.com.tw/index\\_eng.asp](http://www.fpg.com.tw/index_eng.asp)

<http://www.fpcusa.com/>

[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/17/business/17wang.html?\\_r=1&scp=1&sq=formosa%20plastic%20group&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/17/business/17wang.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=formosa%20plastic%20group&st=cse)

[http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-10-07-texasexplosion\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-10-07-texasexplosion_x.htm)

<http://www.commondreams.org/headlines05/1007-09.htm>

<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/biz/archives/2009/06/06/2003445503>

<http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/t-business/2009/05/29/210051/p2/Formosa-Plastics.htm>

<http://www.taiwantoday.tw/ct.asp?xItem=59695&CtNode=436>

[http://www.osha.gov/pls/osaweb/owares.do\\_search](http://www.osha.gov/pls/osaweb/owares.do_search)

<http://www.csb.gov/newsroom/detail.aspx?nid=173>

<http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/ehs/news/toxic-home-on-the-range>



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### **Greetings Wild at Heart / Taiwan**

Wild at Heart Legal Defense Association, Taiwan is grateful to Ethecon for pillorying of the Formosa Plastics Corporation with this year's Black Planet Award. A member of the Formosa Plastics Group, responsible for nearly 30% of Taiwan's total carbon emissions, Formosa Plastics has managed to fool governments and large parts of the population around the world into allowing it to operate in a manner that poisons people and the rest of the environment wherever Formosa Plastics and its affiliates go.

Perhaps the Black Planet Award to Formosa Plastics will help bring attention to Taiwan's shame, to the company that more than any other represents the sacrifice of fishers, farmers livelihoods through its destruction and pollution of sea coasts and farmland. Perhaps this will expose how its promises of jobs and prosperity to one of the poorest areas in Taiwan have amounted to nil, or rather have resulted in the area becoming a forgotten wasteland where people are forced to breathe toxins and where the gangsters and politicians elected with support from Formosa Plastics are indistinguishable. High government officials admit that "all the gangsters in Yunlin (location of Formosa Plastics' largest facility in Taiwan) are raised and nurtured by Formosa".

Wild at Heart's director Robin Winkler was a commissioner with Taiwan EPA's Environmental Impact Assessment Commission for two years during which he joined other commissioners in attempting to hold Formosa Plastics to its promises, commitments and legal obligations. During this time the degree of Formosa Plastics' influence on government, academia and enforcement officials was startlingly clear. The commission was unable to obtain complete, accurate or timely information on Formosa Plastics' activities. After Robin left the commission he was beat up in the Taiwan EPA by a locally elected gangster while the manager of Formosa Plastics looked on.



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In the summer of 2009 a health study was made public concerning the populations in areas adjacent to Formosa Plastics' largest project in Taiwan the 6th Naphtha Plant but the Taiwan EPA has just sat on the report.

We hope this award will raise international awareness about this global gangster and pressure will be put on the Taiwan government to bring them to account.

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### **Open Letter PVC Campaign / USA**

Greetings and solidarity from the United States.

The Center for Health, Environment and Justice (CHEJ) would like to thank ethecon for awarding Formosa Plastics GROUP, its CEO Lee Chih-tsuen, as well as to its founder and capital provider, the Wang Family, this year's 2009 Black Planet award.

Formosa Plastics is one of the largest manufacturers of PVC plastic in the world, and PVC is without a doubt the most toxic plastic for our health and environment. No other plastic contains or releases as many dangerous chemicals. These include dioxins, phthalates, vinyl chloride, ethylene dichloride, lead, cadmium, and even bisphenol A. There's no safe way to manufacture, use or dispose of PVC products throughout its lifecycle.

PVC plants are disproportionately located in low-income communities and communities of color, making the production of PVC an issue of environmental justice and racism for neighboring residents. PVC manufacturing facilities have poisoned workers and fence-line neighbors, polluted the air, contaminated drinking water supplies, and even wiped entire communities off the map.

Each year, in the U.S. PVC plants pump some 500,000 pounds of vinyl chloride – a known human carcinogen - and many other toxins into the atmosphere. Cancer-causing Dioxins are released into the atmosphere from the production and eventual disposal of PVC. When its entire lifecycle is considered, PVC appears to be associated with the release of more Dioxins than any other single product.

According to the International Agency for Research on Cancer and the U.S. National Toxicology Program, vinyl chloride is a known human carcinogen, and ethylene dichloride is a probable human carcinogen. Workers in plants that manufacture PVC or its feedstocks receive the highest exposures to these compounds in workplace air—81,000 U.S. workers are regularly exposed to vinyl chloride, while 77,000 are exposed to EDC.



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PVC workers are regularly exposed to toxic phthalates; according to the National Toxicology Program, "workers may be exposed to relatively high concentrations during the compounding of DEHP with PVC resins. The major route of exposure is inhalation."

Studies have documented links between working in PVC facilities and the increased likelihood of developing diseases including angiosarcoma, a rare form of liver cancer, brain cancer, lung and liver cancer lymphomas, leukemia, and liver cirrhosis.

Workplace exposures in PVC facilities have been significantly reduced from the levels of the 1960s, however there is no threshold below which vinyl chloride does not increase the risk of cancer. Thus, current exposures in the U.S. continue to pose cancer hazards to workers. Furthermore, occupational exposure to VCM remains extremely high in some facilities in Eastern Europe and Asia.

Formosa Plastics has been no stranger to these pollution problems, pumping the air with cancer-causing chemicals, exposing workers and community members to hazardous chemicals of concern.

In 2009, the U.S. Department of Justice reached a \$13 million agreement with Formosa Plastics, for "extensive" violations at their plants in Louisiana and Texas. According to the Department of Justice, "EPA identified extensive Clean Air Act leak detection and repair violations, including failing to properly monitor leaking components, failing to include chemical manufacturing equipment in its leak detection and repair program, and failing to timely repair leaking equipment. Inspectors also identified a variety of hazardous waste violations at both facilities. In addition, the inspectors found that Formosa had violated wastewater discharge limits under its CWA permits, and, at the Texas facility, had failed to comply with the CAA benzene waste operations requirements and to submit correct toxic release reporting information to EPA."

This isn't the first time Formosa has had problems at their plants, especially in Point Comfort, Texas.



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A new study found that cows downwind of the Formosa Plastics plant have DNA damage. The study found that cattle with the DNA damage were oriented around the facility, with the highest damage occurring with those nearby and those downwind. The changes in chromosome structure and other genetic damage can increase the animal's risk of cancer and reproductive damage.

In Point Comfort, Texas, vinyl chloride was discovered in wells near the Formosa PVC chemical plant, and the company had to spend one million dollars cleaning up contaminated groundwater. This same company was fined in 1991 for over \$3 million (U.S.) for hazardous waste violations related to the groundwater contamination.

Without a doubt, Formosa is one of the most egregious PVC polluters around the world. We salute you for recognizing this major corporate polluter.

Thank you. In the spirit of environmental justice,

PVC-Campaign

Center of Health, Environment and Justice (CHEJ)

New York, NY

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eMail [mike@chej.org](mailto:mike@chej.org)

Internet [www.chej.org](http://www.chej.org) / [www.besafenet.com/pvc](http://www.besafenet.com/pvc)





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### **Greetings Diane Wilson / USA**

Greetings to ethecon Foundation members, awardees, and honored guests. My name is Diane Wilson and in 2006 I was awarded ethecon's first Blue Planet Award. I was extremely honored and pleased at that time to have received the Blue Planet Award that highlighted not only my environmental work in Texas on behalf of the bays and estuaries along the Gulf of Mexico and the fishing communities who live there, but also my work as an anti-war activist.

Today, I am just as delighted knowing that the ethecon Foundation is awarding the Wang family, Lee Chih-tsuen, and the responsible management of Formosa Plastics Corporation the Black Planet Award for their destructive environmental and economic practices that has wrought such havoc upon our home, the blue planet Earth.

I am a fourth generation fisherwoman who has been on a boat since I was eight years old and I inherited my love of the sea from my father and grandfather. Therefore, many people think it strange that in 2005 I tried to sink my own forty-two foot fishing boat. The reason was simple enough. The bays where my family had been fishing for generations were being systemically and viciously destroyed by the PVC giant, Formosa Plastics. With obvious disregard and violation of federal environmental law, Formosa Plastics, a Taiwan based family owned dynasty that was built by YC Wang, was discharging millions of gallons of toxic wastewater into a fragile bay without a wastewater permit. And neither the EPA nor the state environmental agency cared. The previous years, Formosa's waste water discharge into another body of water had been so excessive and with so many violations that, according to the Texas Water Commission, Formosa had "totally changed the ecosystem." Now, I feared Formosa officials were prepared to destroy yet another bay for profit and greed. That was the reason for my drastic action to sink my shrimp boat because I clearly saw that the loss of my boat didn't matter against the loss of a bay system and a fishing community's way of life. My intent was to raise a cry about the destructive behavior of the Formosa Plastics Corporation officials.



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Recently, the US EPA hit Formosa Plastics with a \$13 million penalty. This is not news to me. I have been talking with the workers inside the Formosa facility for twenty years and they are all whistle blowers of a sort. They tell me stories about unreported toxic releases, unsafe towers and ladders, rust-filled breathing air valves, breached toxic basins, and uncontained vinyl chloride leaks so plentiful that the alarms were shut off in the control room so the workers could get some peace. These workers often sent complaints to Formosa's management, but the complaints weren't welcomed. Complaints would get you fired. A few of the workers that I talked with were whistle blowers for the state and federal agencies and provided information in 2001 for a wastewater investigation in which the FBI subpoenaed Formosa's wastewater documents. The allegations were that Formosa's management was manipulating the wastewater reports. In other words, they were cooking the books. That went nowhere, too. A toxic investigator, later, said in their last meeting that even though the EPA/FBI/Texas environmental task force had a case against Formosa, the investigation was dropped. In Texas, it is common knowledge that corporations have big sticks and they use them.

So, the violations didn't stop. I suppose that is the reason for the recent \$13 million settlement/Consent Decree against Formosa Plastics. I guess even the EPA gets fed up. Recent findings by EPA investigators at the Formosa facility in Point Comfort, Texas showed extensive Clear Air Act leak detection and repair violations, including failure to properly monitor leaking components (500 in one unit), failure to include chemical manufacturing equipment in its leak detection and repair program, and failure to timely repair leaking equipment. The inspectors also found "extensive" leak detection and repair violations, as well as other hazardous waste violations at the site and wastewater discharge violations.

In January 2009, the science journal *Ecotoxicity*, published a report by scientists at Texas A&M. The report revealed changes in chromosome structure and other genetic damage in cattle as far as six miles downwind of Formosa. The changes in chromosome structure and other genetic damage can increase the animal's risk of cancer and reproductive damage. Because of the strong, steady wind from the southeast, researchers expected that if Formosa



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Plastics was the main culprit, then cattle located downwind or northwest from the facility would show larger genetic disturbances. The results provided a "strong indication of increased damage." Wesley Bissett, lead study author and veterinarian at Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine, said the cattle with the DNA damage were "orientated around the Formosa facility, with the highest damage occurring with those nearby and those downwind." Bissett reported damage to cattle both within close proximity of the Formosa facility and in areas where the prevailing winds would blow the toxic gases.

This month, October, 2009 the EPA will conduct a meeting in Calhoun County to discuss Formosa's extensive ethylene dichloride contamination that has been caused, in part, by their process exceedances, overflows, spills, and general sloppy housekeeping that has forced closure of a nearby state rest area on Highway 35, buy-out of subsequent nearby property, burying of 'questionable area' under five foot of soil, and contamination of the groundwater and nearby Cox Creek in the thousands and sometimes hundreds of thousands part per million. The safety of local water wells is unsure at this time.

I believe that Formosa's sloppy environmental record can only mean that their occupational record is equally suspect. I worry about the workers. Many of them have documented thrombocytosis, neurological damage, cognitive impairment, severe peripheral neuropathy that can only be treated with a surgically implanted pump that delivers morphine to the spinal nerves 24/7. One worker worries because a friend in his unit died from brain cancer. Another female worker sniffed the leaking valves and flanges around the PVC unit for leaks and died of angiosarcoma, liver cancer. A number of workers have developed knots on their heads and have been told by their friends to get a biopsy -- but they don't because they are afraid of what they will find -- brain cancer.

The concern about brain cancer among the workers has been so severe that eventually Formosa got wind of it and sent out a memo to all the vinyl employees that they were bringing in a doctor who could talk about brain cancer. Basically, the doctor told the concerned workers



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that there was no link to vinyl chloride exposure and brain cancer. Who knows what caused it. Probably the barbeque they ate. Too much water. After all, the dose makes the poison.

One of Formosa's workers was involved in the daily logging of vinyl chloride leaks in the PVC unit. The federal safety limit for vinyl chloride for workers in a plant is 1 part per million for eight hours. The vinyl leaks around the PVC unit ranged from 1.2 to 7 to 13 to 35 to 177 to 987 to 6,000 parts per million, and this for every hour of every day of every year. And the worker had been there for 25 years. Another time EDC (ethylene dichloride) was sent in error to the PVC/VCM unit and the workers waded in the stuff for three days with nothing but rubber boots and gloves to protect them. Another time, the process line was tied into the drinking water line and the workers drank vinyl chloride tainted water. This worker's last act at Formosa was after a supervisor requested he falsify a four-ton vinyl chloride release so that the company could report 2.79 pounds to the EPA.

I am deeply pleased to be giving this greeting at the ethecon Foundation's annual Blue Planet and Black Planet Award ceremony. Primarily, because this group has had the fortitude and dogged persistence to track down the individuals and corporate officers responsible for Formosa Plastic's destructive and irresponsible actions upon the bays that I love and the people that live around them and they have courage to show their faces on the world stage. Bravo Bravo, ethecon Foundation.

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### **Open Letter / Injured Workers United**

US Department of Labor,  
Occupational Safety & Health Administrations (OSHA)  
Wilson Plaza 606 N Carancahua Ste. 700  
Corpus Christi, Texas 78476

CC.

US Department of Labor  
Occupational Safety & Health Administrations (OSHA)  
200 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20210

US Department of Labor  
Occupational Safety & Health Administrations  
525 Griffin Street, Suite 602  
Dallas, Texas 75202

US Office of General Accounting  
441 G St. NW  
Washington DC, 20548-0002

Committee on Education and Labor  
Honorable George Miller, Chairman  
2181 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington DC, 20515

The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington DC, 20500

US Environmental Protection Agency  
Ariel Rios Building  
1200 Pennsylvania Ave, NW  
Washington DC 20460



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US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6  
Fountain Place 12th floor, Suite 1200  
1445 Ross Avenue  
Dallas, Texas 75202-2733

Office of the Governor  
P.O.Box 12428  
Austin, Texas 78711-2428

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality  
Executive Director, Mark Vickery MC 109  
P.O.Box 13087  
Austin, Texas 78711-3087

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality  
Chairman, Bryan Shaw  
P.O.Box 13087  
Austin, Texas 78711-3087

To Whom it May Concern:

We, the Injured Workers United from Calhoun County, Texas, are writing to express our concern about the Formosa Plastics facility in Point Comfort, Texas. We are former workers of Formosa (some current) who formed a group in order to support each other through our disabilities, illnesses, financial hard times, and the experience of working under a company that, we believe, has shown, and continues to show, a high disregard for its workers, community, and the environment.

Some of us have been working at Formosa Plastics, Point Comfort, Texas since the plant's start up in 1981. Many of us have given eighteen years, twenty years, twenty-five years, and twenty-seven years of service to a company that has shown a consistent callousness for the worker and a dangerous inaptness about how they run their company.



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Recently, the EPA hit Formosa Plastics with a \$13 million penalty. This is not news to us. Almost all of us are whistle blowers of a sort, but often our whistle blowing has been about unreported releases, unsafe towers, tack welded ladders, and uncontained vinyl chloride leaks so plentiful that the alarms were shut off in the control room. These complaints were sent to Formosa's management, where they went nowhere. A few more of us were whistle blowers for the state and federal agencies and provided information in 2001 for the wastewater investigation in which the FBI subpoenaed Formosa's wastewater documents. That went nowhere, too. A toxic investigator said in their last meeting that even though the EPA/FBI/Texas environmental task force had a case against Formosa, the investigation was dropped.

Certainly, the violations didn't stop. Which is, we suppose, the reason for the recent \$13 million settlement/Consent Decree against Formosa Plastics. I guess even the EPA gets fed up. Recent findings by EPA investigators at the Formosa facility in Point Comfort, Texas showed extensive Clear Air Act leak detection and repair violations, including failure to properly monitor leaking components (500 in one unit), failure to include chemical manufacturing equipment in its leak detection and repair program, and failure to timely repair leaking equipment. The inspectors also found "extensive" leak detection and repair violations, as well as other hazardous waste violations at the site and wastewater discharge violations.

In January 2009, the science journal Ecotoxicity, published a report by scientists at Texas A&M. The report revealed changes in chromosome structure and other genetic damage in cattle as far as six miles downwind of Formosa. The changes in chromosome structure and other genetic damage can increase the animal's risk of cancer and reproductive damage. Because of the strong, steady wind from the southeast, researchers expected that if Formosa Plastics was the main culprit, then cattle located downwind or northwest from the facility would show larger genetic disturbances. The results provided a "strong indication of increased



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In October, 2009 the EPA will conduct a meeting in Calhoun County regarding Formosa's extensive ethylene dichloride contamination that has been caused, in part, by their process exceedances, overflows, spills, and general sloppy housekeeping that has forced closure of a nearby state rest area on Highway 35, buy-out of subsequent nearby property, burying of 'questionable area' under five foot of soil, and contamination of the groundwater and nearby Cox Creek in the thousands part per million. The safety of local water wells is unsure at this time.

Our reasons for writing are several. We believe that Formosa's sloppy environmental record can only mean that their occupational record is equally suspect. We, ourselves, are proof of it. Many of us have documented thrombocytosis, neurological damage, cognitive impairment, severe peripheral neuropathy that can only be treated with a surgically implanted plant that delivers morphine to the spinal nerves 24/7. One member has a friend in his unit that died from brain cancer. Another worker that sniffed the leaking valves and flanges, for which the EPA recently cited Formosa, died of angiosarcoma, liver cancer. A number of workers have developed knots on their heads and have been told by friends to get a biopsy, but they haven't because they are afraid of what they will find. Brain Cancer.

The concern about brain cancer among the workers has been so severe that Formosa sent out a memo to all the vinyl employees that they were bringing in a doctor who could talk about brain cancer. Basically, the doctor told the concerned workers that there was no link to vinyl chloride exposure and brain cancer. Who knows what caused it. Probably the barbeque they ate. Too much water. After all, the dose makes the poison.





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One of our injured workers was involved in Formosa's daily logging of vinyl chloride leaks in the PVC unit. He said the leaks ranged from 1.2 to 7 to 13 to 35 to 177 to 987 to 6,000 parts per million, and this for every hour of every day of every year. And he was there for 25 years. Another time EDC (ethylene dichloride) was sent in error to the PVC/VCM unit and the workers waded in the stuff for three days with nothing but rubber boots and gloves to protect them. Another time, the process line was tied into the drinking water line and the workers drank vinyl chloride tainted water. This worker's last act at Formosa was after a supervisor requested he falsify a four-ton vinyl chloride release so that the company could report 2.79 pounds to the EPA.

Randy Smith, vice president and general manager at Formosa Plastics, Point Comfort, Texas recently, and in reference to the \$13 million settlement, said, "there is no significant environmental or health issues." That is ludicrous, but it deserves a response. So we are requesting that OSHA, in accordance with its duties to protect workers, immediately begin to monitor current workers in all areas of PVC production at Formosa Plastics. Personal exposures, objective air monitoring on site, and biomarker or biological studies are suggested. OSHA should also be concerned that former workers have been impacted by their occupational careers at Formosa and should be part of the review. We are requesting a meeting in a timely manner where we might discuss this objective.

Our group is currently working with scientists from Tulane University Health Science Center, School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, Texas A&M School of Veterinary Medicine, and University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston who have been alarmed, as we are, at the health problems we and our fellow Formosa workers are exhibiting. The hospitals in Taiwan call the worker illnesses related to Formosa the "Formosa Syndrome." We have the same problem here in Texas.



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It is our hope to meet with you soon. We are tired of waiting. Looking forward to your response.

Sincerely,

The Injured Workers committee

Injured Workers United

PO Box 1001

Seadrift, Texas 77983

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