Fairbanks North Star Borough

Office of the Mayor

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September 7, 2011

Dr. Francis Collins, Director
National Institutes of Health
Building 1 – Shannon Building, 126
1 Center Dr
Bethesda MD

Dear Dr. Collins,

As Mayor of the Fairbanks North Star Borough, Alaska, I write to you to request the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Toxicity Program further study toxicity research on sulfolane, a chemical agent that residents of North Pole, Alaska have been exposed to via contaminated domestic water supplies.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) released a *Health Consultation on Sulfolane dated May 2, 2011;* unfortunately, since so little research has been performed on sulfolane, the document had very little to draw from for guidance on health guidance doses for long term exposure.

The FNSB is supportive of the low guidance dose of daily exposure, but given that so little is known, we respectfully request further research into the toxicity characteristics of sulfolane over long term exposures. We know through ATSDR research that sulfolane's acute toxicity is well known and characterized in humans and other species. ToxStrategies, one of the contractors for the potentially responsible party for release of sulfolane into the ground water, criticized ATSDR for not having done an independent dose-response analysis to determine the public health action level. ToxStrategy believes the action level should be higher; the FNSB disagrees with ToxStrategies approach as I feel it is better to error on the side of caution. The FNSB would like to request ATSDR perform the necessary research to arrive at a final action level so residents can best ascertain what would be the best course of action for long term water supplies, remediation, and settlement with potentially responsible parties.

I appreciate the time and effort ATSDR and NIH has spent on the North Pole sulfolane issue, and hope that a plan and funding will be in place to complete a water supply system that will ensure that no one has to use or consume water from groundwater that has been contaminated by sulfolane. I request and support NIH performing more research of the health effects of daily low doses of sulfolane on humans. I hope you will also contact resident and former residents of North Pole to follow up on health issues that can be attributed to sulfolane exposure.

Sincerely,
[Redacted]

Luke T. Hopkins
Mayor

Cc:
Senator Lisa Murkowski
Senator Mark Begich
Congressman Don Young
Governor Sean Parnell
Commissioner Larry Hartig, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
Jeff Cook, Flint Hills Regional Director of External Affairs