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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION ELIZABETH HANFORD DOLE
TO THE CHEMICAL MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION
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ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

I think it highly appropriate that we convene in St. Louis, which in addition to producing great beer and great baseball, has historically served as one of America's premier transportation hubs. Even today, St. Louis remains our Gateway to the West, served by no fewer than five interstate highways, and a dozen rail lines... And... if you prefer something a little slower-paced, well, there's always the Clydesdales, or the showboat down at Laclede's Landing.

Today we all recognize that hazardous materials transportation is important to this country -- to our quality of life as well as our economic vitality.

We acknowledge too that the possibility of catastrophic accidents is ever present. Although the safety record of the hazardous materials transportation system has been excellent, excellence alone is no guarantee of future security. In the past three years fatalities attributable to the interstate transportation of hazardous materials have averaged fewer than ten per year. The annual toll of injuries has been fewer than 250. In light of the huge volume of hazardous materials being transported -- as much as half a million shipments a day -- such a record depends on a strong partnership between industry and government. Within this context I believe we have built a strong foundation of sound regulations, aggressive state enforcement, responsible industry practices and effective emergency response by local authorities. We have come far. But we can go further toward risk reduction by applying our imagination and our knowhow in planning for both accident prevention and emergency response.

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Consider, if you will, the issue of accident prevention. It rests upon a vigorous regulatory scheme which includes the design of the vehicle, the container, driver qualifications, driver training and routing. It is one thing to promulgate rules. It is yet another to educate the public of their significance, and assure that the industry meets these standards.

No less important, is emergency response which requires exhaustive preparation for the worst, including a careful blueprint drawn up by those most knowledgeable of the local environment and local resources.

These objectives can only be achieved with the commitment of every carrier and manufacturer of hazardous materials matched by every community, state, and federal official entrusted with the public safety. At the federal level, our policies should foster creativity and ensure the public safety. They should eliminate and not generate barriers to progress. They should promote equity and fairness through uniform and consistent application of the rules. Meanwhile the roles of all federal agencies involved should be spelled out clearly and unambiguously.

Let's get down to specifics. I'll tell you what you can expect from DOT and what we need from you. To illustrate

Imagine, if you will, the following scenario: you leave this hall and return to your hotel rooms, there to switch on a television set and tune into everyone's worst nightmare. Dateline: Interstate 70, on the outskirts of St. Louis...A cargo tank carrying highly toxic aniline oil, a substance used in making dyes and resins, inks and perfumes, has overturned less than ten miles from the Gateway Arch. Emergency response personnel are on the scene, while local officials have launched a massive evacuation of the area. An unknown number of residents have been rushed to local hospitals, complaining of dizziness, shortness of breath, and severe headache. Further details as they become available -- we now return you to your regular programming.

The purpose of this conference is not to engage in scare tactics, but to forge a working alliance between industry and government at all levels, one capable of preventing lethal accidents and of responding with life-saving vigor should all our precautions prove inadequate.

The job is clearly too big for any one segment of society. By the same token, it is too urgent for any of us to treat it as less than a top priority. Had such an accident occurred on Interstate 70, it would have demanded the best efforts of federal officials, local authorities, and the chemical industry itself.

Before that imaginary truck ever set off on its journey, its owners would have come into contact with federal regulations in many ways. The Department of Transportation has regulations in effect addressing vehicle

design to ensure safe packaging of the load, labeling requirements, and shipping papers describing the hazardous load. Rules such as these, intended to prevent accidents, are constantly being reviewed and rewritten to assure the inclusion of state of the art design criteria, and to enhance accident prevention and containment measures as new information comes to light. For example, just last week tougher regulations became effective for tank trucks carrying liquids toxic by inhalation.

In addition, in a few days the Department will publish a proposed rule imposing more stringent qualifications on those who drive commercial motor vehicles and cargo tanks. DOT has also assigned top priority to a rule establishing performance oriented standards for smaller packages of hazardous materials. It is a monumental task I assure you, one to which we have recently assigned additional staff.

The proposed rule would greatly simplify our packaging standards from their current design specifications. And it will be a significant step in moving this country toward regulatory harmony with international standards, thus facilitating our export trade. As a result, DOT will eliminate over 300 pages of packaging regulations and industry will not confront the time consuming exemption process we presently encounter everytime a safer or more efficient way of packaging goods is developed.

Our pursuit of safety in all forms is a relentless one. I wouldn't have it any other way for as Secretary of Transportation safety is my top priority. I believe this policy has resulted in many improvements in autos and air carriers; on our highways and on our railroads. We can accept nothing less in pipelines and other methods of transporting hazardous materials. I have relied heavily on the expertise of my Safety Review Task Force to which I have assigned the job of independently reviewing safety programs including those dealing with hazardous materials transportation. The task force recommended additional regulatory staff for RSPA, greater coordination among all federal agencies, a comprehensive review of data collection, and commitment to a greater Departmental role in emergency response. Administrator Douglass has developed a plan for implementing the recommendations. In addition she has established interagency workshops on hazardous materials transportation, nuclear transportation and emergency response, such gatherings to be held on a regional basis and in conjunction with the states. Our first set of four workshops took place this winter and spring in San Francisco, Dallas, Chicago, and Cherry Hill, New Jersey. Another set, this time dealing with the issue of emergency response was held in conjunction with FEMA and EPA. Still, a third will be convened this fall on nuclear transportation. In addition, Administrator Douglass has recommended development of a Memorandum of Understanding to better coordinate the work assigned to varying federal agencies; and comprehensive review of data collection along with the issuance of an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking.

Of course I should also mention that I am adding 150 federal inspectors and a commitment of \$50 million in grants to the states to bolster enforcement of current truck safety and hazardous materials transportation safety laws. I have directed Cindy Douglass of RSPA, and Ray Barnhart and Dick Landis of Federal Highways to work together to channel a larger share of these funds to hazardous materials transportation. Together these suggest not merely specific changes you will see occurring at the Department; they point to a change in attitude on the part of federal officials, and a new found willingness to pool our resources and overcome artificial barriers which in the past have blunted our overall effectiveness.

I am firmly convinced that this significant change allows us to increase the effectiveness of our safety enforcement efforts. With dollars devoted to training, more state and local inspectors will go to work on our nation's highways. With more federal inspectors, we can better target our safety auditing functions.

And ladies and gentlemen, to borrow a favorite presidential expression, I predict you ain't seen nothing yet -- The people of Missouri are not alone in their "Show Me" attitude. Where basic safety considerations are at stake, the response must be universal and wholehearted.

Nevertheless, in spite of our best efforts, accidents such as the one I described in the hypothetical scenario do happen. So let me return to Interstate 70, and our overturned vehicle. Soon after the first call has gone out, emergency response teams have reached the scene -- including police cars and firetrucks equipped with copies of RSPA's Emergency Response Guidebook. Since 1980, we have distributed over one million copies throughout the land. Thanks to the American Trucking Association, pocket sized editions are made still more widely available today.

These Guidebooks enable those first responders to identify the nature of the truck's contents, and respond appropriately.

The Guidebook is keyed to the placards and 4 digit numbers which DOT requires to be visually displayed on all sides of the truck. In addition to this, we mandate that shipping papers be carried in the cab of the truck, further identifying its contents.

DOT has worked closely with FEMA and EPA in publishing planning guides for local communities.

All of this has laid the groundwork for uniformity of response. But I am not satisfied. Much as we have done, we have not yet done enough.

To begin with, we must improve communication between the federal government, state and local governments and the private sector. Lack of

communication results, in many cases, in an uncoordinated and costly approach to emergency response. To be sure, there is a wealth of information available. But so long as it is scattered throughout the federal, state and private establishment, it has little practical value.

As this gathering so dramatically points out, nothing is more important in managing hazardous materials than the exchange of information. The steps I am currently taking can do much to eliminate this confusion. Until now the DOT has seen its function in limited terms, that of accident prevention. Today, I am committing the Department to a greater role in emergency response management for hazardous materials transportation accidents. In recent days, I directed the RSPA Administrator to approach her counterparts at FEMA and EPA -- the other two federal agencies with significant emergency response roles, to explore development of a Memorandum of Understanding. This would be a major step in identifying and filling gaps which may now exist. I am pleased to say the project is already underway. In the spirit of that great Missourian, Harry Truman, "the buck stops here", or it will, just as soon as federal roles and responsibilities are made more clear.

Next, RSPA will take responsibility for insuring access to important information for state and local emergency response planners.

I have asked the Administrator of RSPA to establish an information clearinghouse, complete with a toll-free number. It will supply callers with the latest details available on training programs, emergency response teams, planning assistance, and other information useful in helping local communities to design and develop their own efforts.

It is also essential that the law enforcement community be adequately trained as first responders to hazardous materials accidents. In recently held COHMED workshops, state law enforcement officers expressed concern that too often they were left out of the emergency response equation when in fact they are first on-the-scene and bear one of the most critical roles. We will work within our own ranks and alongside the private sector, to implement this and other training efforts and reforms essential to a nationwide network of fully trained and equipped emergency response teams.

No program manager in Washington -- no matter how empathetic or professionally skilled -- can respond as fast or as well as those who are on the accident scene. Nor can one expect to rival the technical sophistication of those whose livelihood is the manufacture and transport of these substances. Thus, we in Washington have carved out a role as catalyst, supplying information to emergency response planners at the state and local levels and encouraging coordinated efforts by trained personnel to prevent spills and incidents from turning into catastrophies.

Now, let us return to our imaginary accident scene on Interstate 70. So long as that truck remains overturned, so long as the people of St. Louis

risk exposure to greater danger, then none of us can rest. Willingness to cooperate is not enough. Those who have responded previously have presumably noted the placards and consulted the Emergency Response Guidebook. They will also have taken the next logical step, and telephoned CHEMTREC, the 24 hour toll-free hotline maintained by the Chemical Manufacturers Association, to guide local response units and clean-up crews.

Two significant expansions of the CHEMTREC system are noteworthy. The first is CHEMNET, which will establish and fund over 200 strategically placed emergency response teams, fully equipped to respond to local requests for help. The second initiative is known as the CAER program (Community Awareness for Emergency Response), undertaken between chemical plant managers and the communities within which they are located. Its purpose is the exchange information between industry and local governments to assist local governments in planning for hazardous materials accidents.

As of next month, CAER will take on a entirely new dimension, as the 20,000 local chapters which together comprise the General Federation of Women's Clubs, launch Women CAER -- an unprecedented campaign to educate local residents and officials alike to the need to plan against the remote but frightening possibility of an overturned truck or derailed boxcar. As one who has worked closely with the Federation in the past, I can attest to its members' energy and enthusiasm.

This by no means exhausts the list of private sector initiatives which deserve public commendation. For instance, there is CMA's Chemical Referral Service, complete with toll-free number for a public anxious to learn about chemical products and their impact on our health and safety. Such groups as the Chlorine Institute, Agricultural Chemicals Association, and American Association of Railroads, all have established teams ready to respond the moment trouble strikes.

Proposals and regulations such as the ones I have outlined today count for little in the abstract. It is the follow through on these programs which ultimately will save lives and prevent injuries, even while they save the federal, state and local governments millions of dollars.

The same can be said for local communities, whose contingency planning can often spell the difference between an ordinary accident and a potentially fatal one. There are few cities or towns on the broad map of America through which no truck will drive, no train will pass. Many of those vehicles will carry hazardous materials. To deal with the worst, we must prepare for the worst. Fortunately, as this conference so ably demonstrates, recent years have witnessed a dramatic surge in local planning efforts. I take considerable encouragement from the likes of Riley County, Kansas, which has incorporated a hazardous materials emergency plan in its overall blueprint for sudden crisis control. In the Dallas-Fort Worth area,

impressive progress is being made in establishing designated routes for highway shipments of hazardous materials through that heavily populated region. These efforts and many, similar ones are being developed daily.

In the end, such planning is a state and local responsibility.

The federal government cannot do it alone -- industry cannot do it alone. We can provide local authorities with planning tools and resources but we cannot and should not seek uniform solutions to unique situations.

And, oh yes -- that overturned truck -- there is a happy ending! Since our scenario unfolded in St. Louis, the problem was soon contained, thanks to a tremendous effort headed up by the Gateway Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Network. Within minutes, the truck was surrounded by local response teams, backed up by experts from industry and the Regional Response Team.

Gateway Network was formed by business and public response agencies, as a not-for-profit corporation, entrusted with an overall emergency response program and with establishment of a regional pool of specialized equipment to handle such emergencies when they occur.

St. Louis and its neighbors in Missouri and Illinois can take pride in a job well done. Their success should spur others to emulate this singularly well-crafted division of responsibilities.

The time has come for all of us -- industry, and government at every level -- to sit down and forge a consensus as to the most helpful, most practical role to be assumed by Washington. This much we know already. A democracy thrives on public differences; only public indifference is fatal to its representative quality. And when it comes to making public policy regarding hazardous materials transportation, public involvement is our greatest asset. For in the partnership which I have described this afternoon, there can be no silent partners -- least of all the American public.

You need little scientific training to understand that chemistry, is a science which relies on balance. One must achieve that right mix -- the exact formula -- or risk failure, and perhaps far more. I assure you that we will not shirk our duty to regulate on behalf of public safety. But neither will we forget that before one can lead, one must listen. My door, I assure you, is always open; so is my mind. I leave St. Louis convinced that a very special kind of chemistry is taking place, one which promises to enlist more people with more expertise and more local sensitivity than ever before.

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