

June 5, 2026

Washington State Senate Environment, Energy & Technology Committee

Washington State House Environment & Energy Committee

Washington State Legislature

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Olympia, WA 98504

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RE: Legislative Action Needed — White Liquor Regulatory Gap, Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) Reform, and Worker Safety — V_1.17

Dear Committee Chairs and Members,

I write with a simple and direct request: we want Port Townsend Paper Company to make safety, health, and the environment their number one priority. Not their second priority. Not a consideration balanced against production schedules and profit margins. Number one.

I am a Port Townsend, Washington resident writing to request that the Washington State Legislature take legislative action to close three regulatory gaps exposed by the May 26, 2026 Longview disaster — the deadliest industrial accident in modern Washington State history — before those gaps produce a comparable disaster at PTPC, the only remaining active kraft mill in Washington State.

PTPC operates a kraft pulp and paper mill on 450 acres bordering Port Townsend Bay, five miles from Port Townsend's residential neighborhoods. The mill produces 950–1,000 tons per day using the kraft process — the same white liquor chemistry (sodium hydroxide and sodium sulfide) that killed 11 workers in Longview, Washington on May 26, 2026, when a white liquor tank imploded at the Nippon Dynawave mill in the deadliest industrial accident in modern Washington State history.

PTPC's documented compliance record is public in US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s EPA Enforcement and Compliance History Online (ECHO) database (FRS ID: 110000490326):

- Clean Air Act: High Priority Violation every single quarter for the past three years
- Clean Water Act: documented spills into Port Townsend Bay including: 800 gallons of untreated process wastewater (November 2021–March 2022, fine \$27,000); 114,000 gallons of untreated wastewater near Glen Cove (April 2025, fine \$20,000 — less than 9 cents per gallon); and 1,000 gallons of condensed water (January 2025) — plus two additional Ecology penalties issued in 2023 for 2022 water quality violations
- Hazardous Waste: June 2025 inspection found 9 violations including emergency preparedness failures

- 12 million gallons of effluent (liquid waste or wastewater discharged into the environment) discharged into Port Townsend Bay every day
- The size, age, and inspection history of PTPC's white liquor storage tanks are not publicly disclosed — white liquor is exempt from US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s Risk Management Program

In 2024, the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) confirmed hydrogen sulfide and other sulfur compounds near PTPC exceed US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) chronic health reference concentrations. The Pacific Northwest sits on the Cascadia Subduction Zone, capable of producing a magnitude 9.0 earthquake. A major seismic event could rupture PTPC's white liquor tanks, overwhelm secondary containment, and send caustic chemicals directly into Port Townsend Bay.

Three Legislative Actions Needed:

1. Kraft Mill White Liquor Tank Safety Act

White liquor is exempt from the federal US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Risk Management Program. This means there is no required public safety plan, no mandated worst-case release scenario, and no public disclosure of tank sizes or inspection history at any US kraft mill. Washington State can close this gap unilaterally by requiring: mandatory independent inspection of white liquor storage tanks at Washington kraft mills with public disclosure of results; mandatory development of public emergency response plans for white liquor releases; and registration of all white liquor storage tanks above threshold quantities with the Washington State Department of Ecology.

2. Fence-Line Air Monitoring Act

The federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) confirmed in 2024 that toxic sulfur compounds near PTPC exceed US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) chronic health reference concentrations. Residents have no access to real-time air quality data from the mill's fence line. Washington State should require continuous real-time fence-line air monitoring at industrial facilities where Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has confirmed emissions above chronic health reference levels — with data publicly accessible online. California has implemented this model successfully.

3. Worker Safety Report Fast-Track Act

In Longview, workers reported a structural problem to the Washington Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) two months before the May 26, 2026 disaster. No action was taken. Eleven people died. Washington State must require that any worker report of structural integrity concerns at hazardous chemical storage equipment trigger a mandatory state inspection within 30 days. No new agency authority is needed — only a mandatory response timeline.

These three pieces of legislation would make Washington the national leader in kraft mill safety and worker protection. They would address gaps that exist in no other state's law. They are directly responsive to the lessons of Longview. We urge you to introduce and advance them in the next legislative session.

Respectfully,

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