

June 5, 2026

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
United States Senator, State of Washington
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RE: Port Townsend Paper Company — Federal Action Needed on White Liquor Safety Following the Longview Disaster — V_1.13

Dear Senator Cantwell,

I am a constituent writing from Port Townsend, Washington, about an urgent industrial safety matter that directly affects Jefferson County and Port Townsend Bay. Following the May 26 Longview disaster — the deadliest industrial accident in modern Washington State history — the only remaining active kraft mill in Washington is Port Townsend Paper Company, five miles from my community. Its compliance record and the regulatory gaps exposed by Longview demand immediate federal attention.

On May 26, 2026, eleven workers died at the Nippon Dynawave kraft paper mill in Longview, Washington, when a 900,000-gallon white liquor tank imploded — the deadliest industrial accident in modern Washington State history. OPB interviewed seven chemical safety experts who confirmed the implosion mechanism involved a blockage that prevented air backfilling the tank as liquid was pumped out, creating catastrophic negative pressure. Workers had reported a structural warning to the Division of Occupational Safety and Health two months before the disaster. No action was taken.

PTPC operates the identical kraft pulping process — the same white liquor chemistry, sodium hydroxide and sodium sulfide — on 450 acres bordering Port Townsend Bay, five miles from residential neighborhoods. PTPC's daily output of 950–1,000 tons per day exceeds Nippon Dynawave's. The size, age, and inspection history of PTPC's white liquor tanks are not publicly disclosed. White liquor is exempt from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Risk Management Program — there is no required public safety plan, no mandated tank disclosure, and no worst-case release scenario on file anywhere.

PTPC's documented compliance record warrants urgent attention following Longview:

- Clean Air Act: High Priority Violation for all 12 of the last 12 consecutive quarters. Only \$99,750 in total penalties across all statutes in five 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; two new formal enforcement orders issued April and May 2026.
- Hazardous Waste (Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA)): June 2025 inspection found 9 violations including emergency preparedness and prevention procedure failures — the exact category that failed at Nippon Dynawave.
- National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) discharge permit: Expired October 2018 — The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) water discharge permit expired in October 2018 and remained on administrative extension for over six years. A new permit was finally issued in May 2025 and expires in May 2030. The 6+ year gap without a valid permit is documented in EPA Enforcement and Compliance History Online (ECHO) records. into Port Townsend Bay.
- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) 2024: Federal scientists confirmed hydrogen sulfide, methyl mercaptan, dimethyl sulfide, and dimethyl disulfide measured near PTPC above US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) chronic health reference concentrations.

On June 1, 2026, Port Townsend Paper Company issued a public statement indicating it has met with industry experts, verified that tank vents are open and overflow lines are not submerged, and is scheduling non-destructive testing of tanks in 2026. These are welcome initial steps. They are not, however, a substitute for the independent inspection with publicly disclosed results that this community is requesting. The key questions remain unanswered: the sizes, ages, and inspection histories of PTPC's white liquor tanks are still not public information.

Federal Actions I Am Requesting from Senator Cantwell:

- Use your position on the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee to call for federal hearings on the white liquor regulatory gap — the Risk Management Program (RMP) exemption that left no public safety plan at Nippon Dynawave, and that leaves none at PTPC today.
- Request that the US Chemical Safety Board include PTPC in the scope of the Longview investigation with interim recommendations issued before the final report.
- Advocate for US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to add sodium hydroxide and sodium sulfide at kraft mill concentrations to the Risk Management Program's list of extremely hazardous substances — requiring public worst-case release scenarios.
- Support legislation requiring mandatory American Petroleum Institute (API) 653 independent inspection of white liquor storage tanks at all US kraft mills with public filing of results — the same standard already required for petroleum tanks.
- Request US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 10 brief your staff on PTPC's compliance record (12/12 Clean Air Act (CAA) High Priority Violation quarters) and the status of the expired National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit — now in its 8th year of administrative extension.

Jefferson County's 33,944 residents — and the 300 workers inside the mill — deserve regulatory protection that currently does not exist. I welcome the opportunity to brief your staff with my full research documentation.

Respectfully,

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