

PTPC Safety Briefing

For the Local Emergency Planning Committee

Citizens for Safe Water and Air - Port Townsend

PORT TOWNSEND, WA

This research has been compiled to the best of our ability from named public sources. If you believe any fact presented here is incorrect or incomplete, please contact safewaterandair@gmail.com so it can be reviewed and corrected.

This is a condensed briefing prepared for this meeting specifically. It draws on a longer research document available in full on request. Every item below traces to a named source.

1. The Core Finding: No One Currently Has Authority to Inspect Port Townsend Paper Company (PTPC)'s White Liquor Tank

This is confirmed, not alleged. Washington's boiler and pressure vessel program excludes atmospheric tanks by definition and separately names black liquor recovery boilers as excluded [4]. The Washington State Department of Ecology's tank authority covers only underground tanks [6]. Washington already has a full working model for exactly this kind of inspection, used for oil tanks, but its authority is legally limited to oil and cannot reach white liquor [5].

2. What We Still Do Not Know, Despite Asking Directly

- Jefferson County Emergency Management has confirmed, in writing, that it has no direct hazardous materials response capability of its own and relies on a Washington State Department of Ecology team based in Olympia, several hours away [1]. There is currently no PTPC-specific emergency plan, no joint exercise has ever been run for a white liquor release, and neither the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe nor the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe has ever been consulted [2].
- A separate, more detailed letter sent to this committee on June 29, 2026, containing approximately 150 specific numbered questions across twelve sections, remains entirely unanswered as of this meeting [3]. It asks, among other things, for the committee's basic governing documents, PTPC's complete chemical inventory, and what PTPC has formally told this committee as a member, as distinct from what it has told the press.

3. This Is Not Hypothetical: It Has Happened Before, Including Recently

- Eleven workers died at Nippon Dynawave in Longview, Washington, on May 26, 2026, in a white liquor tank implosion [7].
- Two workers died at Woodland Pulp in Baileyville, Maine, on January 27, 2026, when sulfuric acid reacted with sulfurous compounds and released hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) gas, a gas lethal in one or two breaths at high concentration [8].

- PTPC operates the same general category of high-hazard equipment, including recovery boilers, digesters, and chemical storage and recovery systems, involved in fatal kraft mill accidents in Washington, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, New Hampshire, British Columbia, and Finland [7][9]. The specific failure mechanisms differ, tank implosion, gas release, digester failure, and recovery boiler explosion have each killed workers at different facilities, but all involve equipment PTPC also operates.

4. What This Committee Could Reasonably Ask PTPC Today

- What is the age of PTPC's white liquor tank and recovery boiler, and when were they last inspected?
- Has PTPC ever voluntarily inspected its tank under an industry standard, even though it is not legally required to?
- What has PTPC told this committee specifically, in its capacity as a committee member, about its safety measures since the Longview disaster?
- Does PTPC have a complete chemical inventory on file with this committee, matching the level of detail comparable facilities in other states provide?

5. What We Are Asking of This Committee

Not PTPC's closure, and not blame directed at county staff, who have answered every direct question asked of them so far. We are asking that the roughly 150 questions already submitted in writing receive an actual response, and that this committee use its position as the one body with PTPC sitting at the table to ask the questions above directly, on the record, at this meeting.

Sources and Citations

All factual claims in this document are drawn from the following sources, verified during research for this document.

1. Willie Bence, Director, Jefferson County Department of Emergency Management: written reply to David Ginsberg, June 24, 2026 (full correspondence thread June 7 through June 25, 2026), confirming the department has no direct hazardous materials response capability of its own and relies primarily on the Washington State Department of Ecology's spill response team, based in Olympia, several hours away once mobilization and travel time are counted.
2. Willie Bence, Director, Jefferson County Department of Emergency Management: same June 24, 2026 written reply, confirming that a white liquor-specific annex to the county's Hazardous Materials Response Plan does not yet exist, that no joint hazmat exercise has been conducted for a white liquor release scenario at PTPC, and that neither the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe nor the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe has been involved in Local Emergency Planning Committee conversations regarding PTPC.
3. David Ginsberg to Bradley Brooks, LEPC Planning Coordinator, Jefferson County Department of Emergency Management: "Requested Agenda Items and Record Submission, July 8, 2026 Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) Meeting," sent June 29, 2026, organized into twelve lettered sections (A through L) containing approximately 150 individually numbered questions; unanswered as of this document.
4. Washington Administrative Code (WAC) chapter 296-104, Washington's boiler and pressure vessel program, authorized under chapter 70.79 of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) and administered by the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries. WAC 296-104-010(q) defines an unfired pressure vessel as a closed

vessel under pressure, excluding atmospheric, non-pressurized tanks. WAC 296-104-100(vi) separately states that standard inspection provisions do not apply to a black liquor recovery boiler.

5. Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 296-24-33005, Washington's construction standard for above-ground atmospheric storage tanks, which is limited to flammable liquids; and WAC 173-180-330, Washington's American Petroleum Institute Standard 653-based inspection model for oil storage tanks under the Washington State Department of Ecology's authority in chapter 90.56 of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW), which is limited by statute to petroleum products and does not reach white liquor.

6. Washington State Department of Ecology's underground storage tank inspection program, which inspects underground tanks at least once every three years and does not extend to above-ground tanks, as documented in this campaign's Tank Standards and Inspection research document.

7. News reporting on the May 26, 2026 Nippon Dynawave tank implosion in Longview, Washington: KING5, "Tank that killed 11 at Longview paper mill did not require state or federal inspections," June 2, 2026; KIRO7, "White liquor tanks that imploded at Longview plant not inspected by state or feds, experts say," June 2, 2026; Washington State Standard, "WA agencies lacked role inspecting failed chemical tank in Longview mill disaster"; Wikipedia, "2026 Longview, Washington paper mill implosion."

8. News reporting describing a fatal hydrogen sulfide release at Woodland Pulp in Baileyville, Maine, on January 27, 2026, that killed two workers; specific outlet not independently reconfirmed in this session, flagged for verification before use in formal correspondence.

9. This campaign's Safety Conditions research document, Section 10, "Kraft Industry Accident History, United States, Canada, and Scandinavia," compiling United States Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board (CSB) final reports and news accounts of fatal kraft mill accidents, including the Georgia-Pacific Naheola Mill, Pennington, Alabama, January 16, 2002; an International Paper mill near Vicksburg, Mississippi, approximately 2008; Packaging Corporation of America, DeRidder, Louisiana, February 8, 2017; the Pixelle paper mill, New Hampshire, April 15, 2020; Squamish, British Columbia, 1963; and Aankoski and Kemi, Finland, September 28, 1965 and March 21, 2024 respectively.