



December 3, 2021

## MEDIA ADVISORY

Tricia Cortez | 956-319-4374 | [tricia@rgisc.org](mailto:tricia@rgisc.org)

Melissa R Cigarroa | 956-206-7590 | [cigarroa.melissa@gmail.com](mailto:cigarroa.melissa@gmail.com)

## Concerned Citizens Launch Clean Air Laredo Coalition

*Invites Community to Townhall; Demands End to Cancer-Causing Ethylene Oxide Emissions*

**LAREDO, TX** - To confront a significant public health threat in Laredo, a group of concerned citizens has formed the Clean Air Laredo Coalition and is inviting the community to a neighborhood townhall to get better informed and take action.

**WHAT:** Ethylene Oxide Townhall

**WHO:** Clean Air Laredo Coalition with CM Vanessa Perez, Dist 7, and Rio Grande International Study Center

**DATE & TIME:** Wednesday, December 8 @ 6:30 pm

**WHERE:** Fasken Community Center (15201 Cerralavo Dr., 78045)

**DETAILS:** Free and open to the public. More info at [cleanairlaredo.org](http://cleanairlaredo.org)

The Coalition is demanding that Midwest Sterilization Corp. zero out all ethylene oxide emissions that it's releasing into the air because of the extreme level of cancer risk for Laredo, based on U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) data. Midwest, which is based in Jackson, Missouri, opened its Laredo plant in 2005. It's located in the Killam Industrial Park off Mines Road.

Ethylene oxide (EtO) is a mutagenic DNA-damaging gas used in Laredo as a sterilizing agent for medical equipment. In 2016, the EPA found that ethylene oxide is 60 times more toxic to children than previously estimated, and has linked inhalation exposure to lymphomas, leukemias and breast cancer.

In Laredo, 10 schools now rank among the top 1% of all schools in the entire United States as most air toxic and hazardous, according to a recent study by the University of Massachusetts at Amherst: Muller ES, Fasken ES, United Day School, Kazen ES, Finley ES, Perales MS, Washington MS, Matias de Llano ES, and Trautmann MS. Sadly, 84 other Laredo schools rank in the top 6% as the most air toxic.

Edna Ibarra, Coalition member, urged Laredoans to get informed and unite. "As a mother of 3 and a resident of La Bota, one of the closest neighborhoods to Midwest, I feel appalled that our regulating authorities have not informed us of the dangers of living so close to this facility," Ibarra said. "We NEED clean air to live and the air that we are breathing will give us cancer if there is no change. Clean air is our right and the right of our children. Given the current levels of toxicity in our city, there is nowhere to go. All the city is affected. We need to come together as a community and learn more and demand clean air. We need people to go to the townhall and join us."

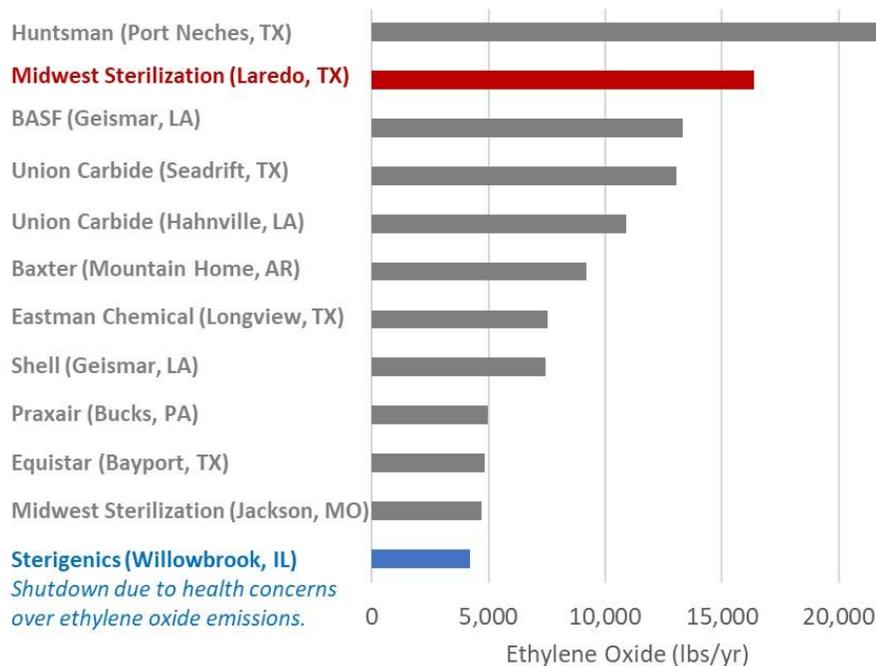
Local attorney and Coalition member Daniel Elizondo agreed: "This cancer-causing gas being emitted into Laredo's air by Midwest must come to an end now. Laredoans deserve and must demand that their

air is clean and free of ethylene oxide.” He noted that cancer is the second leading cause of all U.S. deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

### Ethylene Oxide & Laredo

The EPA has classified EtO as one of the most hazardous air toxins that pose the greatest health threat in urban areas. In 2019, Midwest emitted more than 16,000 pounds of this toxin into the air, based on its self-reported data to the EPA, making Laredo the second leading EtO emitter in the country.

TOP EMITTERS OF ETHYLENE OXIDE IN THE U.S., VERSUS STERIGENICS' CLOSED PLANT



*Based on self-reported 2019 emissions from the U.S. EPA's Toxic Release Inventory (TRI), except for Sterigenics, which is based on 2016 TRI emissions (most recent available).*

Vanessa Perez, council member for District 7 which includes the Midwest facility and severely impacted neighborhoods and schools, said that Midwest’s ethylene oxide emissions are unacceptable and must come to an end.

“Our community has to be safe, especially for our children and future,” said Perez, who helped form the Coalition with a growing group of teachers, parents, scientists, elected officials, nonprofit organizations, attorneys, and other concerned citizens.

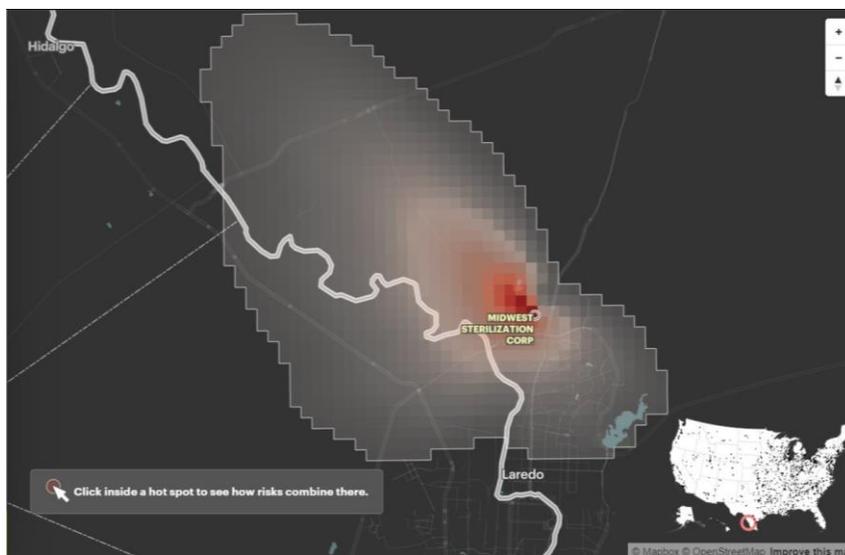
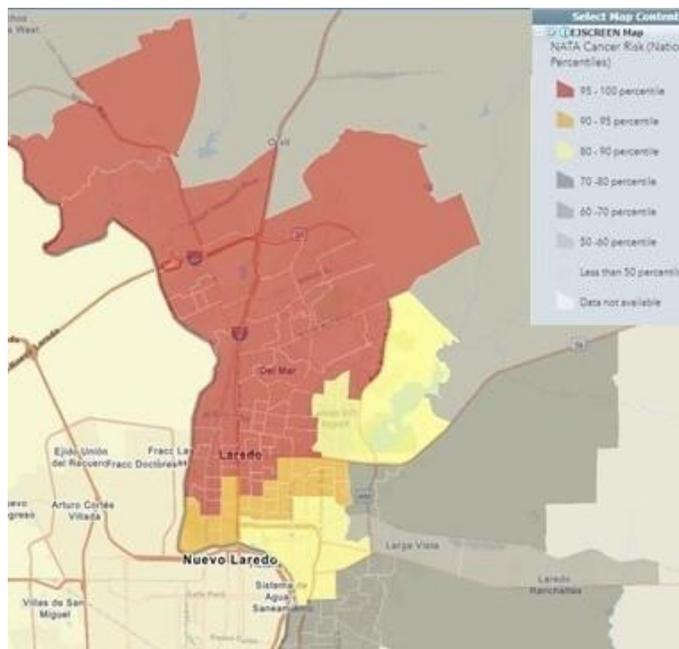
EPA data show that a majority of Laredo residents fall within the highest level of cancer risk in the country (top 95-100%) meaning that someone who lives in the red area on the [map below](#) has a higher cancer risk of developing cancer from air pollution than 95% of all other Americans.

A new investigative map, [below](#), by ProPublica shows the extreme cancer risk for residents who live and work in Laredo, particularly in the northwest, north, and central parts of the city.

ProPublica’s two-year review of EPA data, shows that Midwest’s EtO emissions are estimated to increase cancer risk for people living within five miles of the facility by an average of 1 in 13,000, much higher than

the EPA's threshold of 1-in-1 million as an "acceptable risk" which triggers federal regulations to notify polluters.

The risk is substantially greater the closer to the facility you live. At Muller ES, the risk increases to 1 in 3,700. For Midwest's immediate neighbors (employees and business owners who work within the Killam Industrial Park), their risk increases to 1 in 560, a dramatic difference directly linked to EtO emissions.



“We believe that the EPA should begin air monitoring around the Midwest facility immediately to accurately measure EtO emissions here in Laredo,” said RGISC Board President Melissa R. Cigarroa. “Midwest should clean up its act. This company, which has been emitting EtO since 2005, says that it has invested in technology to reduce EtO emissions, but according to their own reporting, emissions continue. The dangerous risks of cancer remain too high for residents and our children.”

*The Clean Air Laredo Coalition advocates for toxin-free air in Laredo, believing that industry can invest in existing technology to create a safe and healthy environment in which to live, work and breathe.*