

Reinventing the wheel

Worker safety is a prime concern at Mobil. So is the safety of our neighbors in communities surrounding our manufacturing facilities.

That's why we have extensive programs in place to prevent accidents, and plans to deal with accidents if they do happen.

And just to keep us on our toes, there are a wealth of federal and state regulations we comply with that govern worker and community safety, most notably—on the federal side—the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) process safety management standards.

So it concerns us to learn that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing regulations that will overlap existing OSHA and state regulations regarding worker and community safety. This will have a significant cost impact on manufacturers—and the taxpayer and consumer—without substantially improving public health and safety.

A single federal prevention program is in everyone's interest.

The petroleum and chemical industries continue to work hard to improve on an already excellent safety record. We work with OSHA and state and local governments to develop, implement and monitor programs intended to insure facility and employee safety and prevent catastrophic accidents. In 1992, for example (the last year for which complete data is available), the accident rate at Mobil's petroleum and chemical operations was more than 80 percent below the average accident rate for all U.S. manufacturers.

Establishing plans and procedures to comply with safety and environmental regulations is costly and involves coordination and teamwork among many parties, not just within a facility but with its neighbors, local government and state and federal regulators.

If industry cooperates with government agencies, why can't government agencies cooperate with each other? Why can't EPA simply adopt OSHA's process safety management regulations and build on them where appropriate, rather than impose a whole new set of rules?

The EPA's proposed regulations are in response to the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. The intent of those amendments is to protect the public from catastrophic accidental releases of acutely hazardous materials.

However, the EPA proposal under discussion would apply to many more situations than catastrophic environmental releases and, as a result, would add unnecessary and costly requirements that duplicate or needlessly expand on the provisions of existing federal and state regulations.

In these days of high government costs and taxes, it's more imperative than ever for government agencies to work in unison. Industry wants to provide a safe workplace for employees and to fulfill its responsibilities to neighbors and surrounding communities.

Having two sets of rules that are just different enough to add substantially to the burden and cost of compliance without any measurable improvement in safety doesn't make sense.

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MY SON AND I WERE AMONG THE AMERICANS who left Rwanda on April 10. My husband, a Rwandan Hutu, stayed behind. All the stories we have seen in the Western press are pro-Tutsi and one-sided. More than 99% of Hutu are also against the ethnic killing of the Tutsi. The disaffected members of society, organized into street gangs, are the ones killing—and not only Tutsi but also Hutu. You hint that both ethnic groups (not tribes) have broken promises. If you look at history, it is obvious that Tutsi have killed more often, targeting educated Hutu, than Hutu have ever done until now. Under President Juvénal Habyarimana, both Hutu and Tutsi were learning to live together.

*Rita Rukashaza
Platteville, Wisconsin*

VISUAL AIDS ARE IMPORTANT DEVICES IN journalism, but the ghastly photograph that accompanies your article on Rwanda goes too far. The horrors of bloodshed may be sufficiently communicated through writing, without employing photographs unfit for publication.

*Alex Walker
Haverford, Pennsylvania*

Something Unusual Is Going On

Readers who believe in otherworldly encounters were quick to support Harvard psychiatrist John Mack's research into people's remarkable



experiences with UFOs [BEHAVIOR, April 25]. Among those who wrote was David Kostecke of Henrietta, New York. He recounted a 1989 experience with an intelligent non-human, noting, "Since my extraterrestrial contact, my body temperature has remained below normal—near 97°." Dave Aaron, director of the UFO Audio-Video Clearing House in Yucaipa, California, objected to criticism of the psychiatrist's scientific methods. "If John Mack's UFO abduction research is 'shoddy,' can you please tell me what the unknown objects are on the 25,000 videotapes that our members have sent in from their home camcorders?" Some took a lighter view, among them Donald M. ("I Am Not Mork") Sensing of Burke, Virginia, who claims to be the offspring of a union between an earthling and a space alien. He warned us to print his letter, or "expect to take a little trip . . ."