

Center for Media and Democracy

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The Poison Papers Expose Decades of Collusion between Industry and Regulators over Hazardous Pesticides and Other Chemicals

Watchdog Groups Digitize and Release 20,000 Documents for Public Review

The Bioscience Resource Project and the Center for Media and Democracy today are releasing a trove of rediscovered and newly digitized chemical industry and regulatory agency documents stretching back to the 1920s. The documents are available at PoisonPapers.org.

Together, the papers show that both industry and regulators understood the extraordinary toxicity of many chemical products and worked together to conceal this information from the public and the press. These papers will transform our understanding of the hazards posed by certain chemicals on the market and the fraudulence of some of the regulatory processes relied upon to protect human health and the environment.

"These documents represent a tremendous trove of previously hidden or lost evidence on chemical regulatory activity and chemical safety. What is most striking about these documents is their heavy focus on the activities of regulators. Time and time again regulators went to the extreme lengths of setting up secret committees, deceiving the media and the public, and covering up evidence of human exposure and human harm. These secret activities extended and increased human exposure to chemicals they knew to be toxic," said **Dr. Jonathan Latham, Executive Director of the Bioscience Resource Project**.

The Poison Papers are a compilation of over 20,000 documents obtained from federal agencies and chemical manufacturers via open records requests and public interest litigation. They include scientific studies and summaries of studies, internal memos and reports, meeting minutes, strategic discussions, and sworn testimonies.

The majority of these documents have been scanned and digitized for the first time and represent nearly three tons of material. The regulatory agency sources of these documents include: the EPA, the USDA Forest Service, the FDA, the Veterans Administration, and the Department of Defense. Chemical manufacturers referenced in the documents include: Dow, Monsanto, DuPont, and Union Carbide, as well as many smaller manufacturers and the commercial testing companies who worked for them.

The Poison Papers catalogue the secret concerns of industry and regulators over the hazards of pesticides and other chemicals and their efforts to conceal those concerns. Most of the Poison Papers were collected by author and activist Carol Van Strum.

"In total, the stark truth revealed by these 50 years of documents is that the entire pesticide industry could not exist without lies, coverups, rampant fraud, and government enablers," said **Van Strum, who authored the 1983 book ["Bitter Fog: Herbicides and Human Rights."](#)**

Corporate concealment is not a new story. What is novel in the Poison Papers is the abundant evidence that EPA and other regulators were often knowing participants or even primary instigators of these cover-ups. These regulators failed to inform the public of the hazards of dioxins and other chemicals; of evidence of fraudulent independent testing; and of widespread human exposure. The papers thus reveal, in the often-incriminating words of the participants themselves, an elaborate universe of deception and deceit surrounding many pesticides and synthetic chemicals.

The chemicals most often discussed in the documents include dioxins, herbicides and pesticides (such as 2,4-D, Dicamba, Permethrin, Atrazine, and Agent Orange) and PCBs. Some of these chemicals are among the most toxic and persistent ever manufactured. Except for PCBs, almost every chemical discussed in the Poison Papers is still manufactured and sold today, either as products or as product contaminants.

"The Poison Papers will be a tremendous resource for researchers, the media, and everyday Americans worried about many of the chemicals used on farm fields and in common consumer products," said **Mary Bottari of the Center for Media and Democracy.**

EXPLORE: Some of the 20,000+ documents in this repository have surfaced over the years. Many have never been seen online or publicly written about. The Poison Papers therefore offer a unique opportunity for researchers, the public and the media to discover much more about what was known about chemical toxicity, when, and by whom.

ACCESS: You can access the papers at PoisonPapers.org. Important instructions on how best to search these old documents are also [available here](#) and on the website.

Poison Papers Reveal:

Secrecy — They disclose EPA meeting minutes of a secret high-level dioxins working group that admitted dioxins are [extraordinarily poisonous](#) chemicals. Internal minutes contradict the agency's longstanding refusal to regulate dioxins or set legal limits.

Collusion — They demonstrate EPA [collusion](#) with the pulp and paper industry to "[suppress, modify, or delay](#)" the results of the congressionally-mandated National Dioxin Study, which found high levels of dioxins in everyday products, such as baby diapers and coffee filters, as well as pulp and paper mill effluents.

Deception — They provide important new data on the infamous Industrial Bio-Test (IBT) scandal. By the late 1970s, [it was known](#) that more than 800 safety studies performed by IBT on 140 chemicals produced by 38 chemical manufacturers were nonexistent, fraudulent, or invalid. The Poison Papers, however, show that EPA and its Canadian counterpart, the Health Protection Branch (HPB), [colluded](#)

with pesticide manufacturers, to keep invalidly registered products on the market and covered up massive problems with many IBT tests.

Cover-up — The papers also show that EPA staff had evidence that this IBT scandal involved more independent testing companies and more products than ever officially acknowledged.

Concealment — Show that EPA concealed and [falsely described](#) its own studies finding high levels of dioxin - 2,3,7,8-TCDD - in environmental samples and [human breast milk](#) following routine use of 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T (Agent Orange) by the federal Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.

Intent — Show that Monsanto chief medical officer George Roush [admitted under oath](#) to knowing that Monsanto studies into the health effects of dioxins on workers were written up untruthfully for the scientific literature such as to obscure health effects. These fraudulent studies were heavily relied upon by EPA to avoid regulating dioxins. They also were relied upon to defend manufacturers in lawsuits brought by veterans claiming damages from exposure to Agent Orange.

Links to the above documents and more can be found on the website <https://www.poisonpapers.org/>

The mission of [The Bioscience Resource Project](#) is to provide the highest quality scientific information and analysis to enable a healthy food system and a healthy world. The Bioscience Resource Project is an educational nonprofit based in Ithaca New York, USA. It is the publisher of Independent Science News.

The [Center for Media and Democracy](#) (CMD) is a public interest watchdog group based in Madison, Wisconsin. CMD is the publisher of the websites [ExposedbyCMD.org](#), [ALECexposed.org](#), [PRwatch.org](#) and [Sourcewatch.org](#).