Twitter Thread by Kenwardjr



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As the sun came up over West Virginia's Kanawha Valley after a scary night, thinking of chemical plant workers and their families .. a thread … /1

Neighbors with questions about a horrible explosion. Finding answers. Whether we've learned anything after going through this time and again. /2

https://t.co/VKCqKfSalK

There's never enough information when the chemical siren goes off. What happened? Is everybody OK? What was released? How much? Should we shelter or run? /3

These questions were supposed to be answered after Bhopal, (36 years ago this month: https://t.co/iiUlu2Zk7t) with passage of the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act https://t.co/wjaHnUzqMu in 1986. / 4

Some of this information - chemical inventories, worst-case scenarios, response plans - is available (try https://t.co/4ojZWa4nF6) . But too much is hidden away, especially after post-9/11 secrecy measures. /5

Emergency responders do so much for our communities. But often agencies are too cautious with what they tell us. Just as often, companies are the blockers (for example: https://t.co/ZFhznvNDrt) /6

What chemicals are stored in large quantities matters. For so many years, our community lived in the shadow of far more methyl isocyanate than was released at Bhopal. https://t.co/xGv0idi7tJ /7

But how will we know what happened at Belle? What we learn depends on what kind of investigation gets done. /8

OSHA? They check for violations of specific safety standards. EPA or DEP? Maybe they look for permit exceedances. Local officials? No chance. /9

The only real root-cause investigations in our chemical valley in the last 30 years have been by the U.S. Chemical Safety Board. Wonder if anyone will urge them to come back to help us again? / 10

These @chemsafetyboard probes have been enlightening. https://t.co/GlyCsrYpVY /11

They've found that disasters usually come from a string of safety deficiencies https://t.co/Qk5umGAIeY /12

They've found that there were safer ways to do things that were often ignored https://t.co/vxQjRcYi1Y / 13

(That one was at the same site where last night's explosion occurred. A plant worker named Danny Fish died https://t.co/aCSVqRPgFV /14

They've found that the government's failure to act on known risks and implement new safety rules is often at fault https://t.co/mnR4asyuk4 /15

And they've found that sometimes potential disasters were hidden in plain sight if only we bothered to look https://t.co/l2QUMuPBMc /16

But I keep thinking about how a way to help prevent these things has been just ignored for so many years by state and local officials:
https://t.co/WJufv2adYs /17

The great historian John Alexander Williams writes of West Virginia and its "seemingly endless series of disasters." /18

Williams was talking about coal, but it applies to so many things in our beloved, but troubled, state. And it doesn't have to be this way. /end