

Bayer blasted, will close 'America's Bhopal'

Jan 20, 2011 by Pesticide Action Network



Several deaths and decades after it should have, Bayer CropScience [announced](#) last week that it will stop making pesticides using methyl isocyanate (MIC) in the U.S. MIC is the gas that exploded in 1984 in Bhopal, India, killing more than three thousand within weeks and leaving hundreds of thousands injured survivors struggling for justice even today.

Today, January 20, the U.S. Chemical Safety Board (CSB) released its [final report](#) on an August 28, 2008 explosion at the Institute plant that killed two workers and injured another eight. It found that Bayer had rushed to restart production of two pesticides, methomyl and Larvin (thiodicarb), and in the process overrode safety procedures, raising a question about whether Bayer had other reasons to cease MIC production. The 2008 explosion was only the most recent of several over the years.

MIC is an intermediary chemical used to manufacture carbamate pesticides. Bayer's Institute, West Virginia plant, formerly owned by Union Carbide, has been known as "[America's Bhopal](#)" because of huge quantities of MIC stored above ground there posed dangers to the local area similar to those in India. The company, a subsidiary of German conglomerate Bayer AG, second-largest agrichemical producer in the world, [said](#) it would "stop making, storing and using the deadly chemical" in Institute, and close a pesticide plant in Woodbine, Georgia. Bayer cited business reasons: aldicarb — a farm pesticide infamous for "causing the worst known outbreak of pesticide poisoning in North America" 26 years ago, and principal end product of MIC, was finally [banned by EPA in 2010](#).

It would appear that Bayer also announced the end of MIC production and storage last week to lessen the public impact of the CSB's damning report this week.

John Bresland, CSB Chairman in 2008, in announcing the agency's investigation, [noted](#) that "other chemical companies largely phased out the use and bulk storage of MIC due to safety concerns" after the Bhopal explosion. An April 2009 congressional hearing on the 2008 explosion revealed that Bayer had removed and destroyed evidence to keep information surrounding the explosion secret.

Source URL: <http://www.panna.org/blog/bayer-blasted-will-close-americas-bhopal>