

**Question for written answer E-005774/2014  
to the Commission**  
Rule 130  
**Bas Belder (ECR)**

Subject: Major Accident Reporting System (MARS) database on chemical accidents

A citizen in my constituency has drawn my attention to a statement made by US Chemical Safety Board Chairperson Rafael Moure-Eraso on 6 March 2014 at a Senate Environment and Public Works Committee hearing entitled 'Preventing potential chemical threats and improving safety: oversight of the President's executive order on improving chemical facility safety and security', held in response to the Chevron refinery fire in California in 2012, the West Texas explosion in 2013 and the West Virginia water crisis in January 2014. The statement is as follows:

'The United States is facing an industrial chemical safety crisis. [...] Our investigations have concluded that certain fundamental changes are needed. We have a regulatory system that sometimes encourages paper compliance over real risk reduction. [...] The goal should be to drive chemical process risks "as low as reasonably practicable." In Europe, this is a cornerstone of the regulatory system. Insurance statistics tell us European chemical sites have an accident rate at least three times lower than the US'

Figures from the EU Major Accident Reporting System (MARS) database seem to indicate a significant fall in the number of major chemical accidents. Can we conclude that the chemical industry has become much safer? If yes why? If not, why does the database show so few accidents?