

Question for written answer E-001991/2018
to the Commission
Rule 130
Michael Cramer (Verts/ALE)

Subject: Jettisoning of fuel over populated areas and areas in close proximity to airports

Commercial and military aircraft are jettisoning an increasing amount of fuel in emergencies in order to reduce the weight of the aircraft so that they do not exceed the maximum weight for safe landings. Sparsely populated areas and areas in close proximity to airports, e.g. Rhineland-Palatinate, are particularly affected by the jettisoning of fuel. In May 2017, for instance, a Canadian commercial aircraft jettisoned 54 tonnes of fuel over the area. At the same time, another well-known case from this region involved a Boeing 747 that had to return to the airport quickly because of an emergency, yet it did not need to jettison any fuel even though the aircraft was full.

Aircraft fuel contains harmful substances such as hydrocarbons, alkanes, carcinogenic benzene and other additives. When an aircraft jettisons its fuel, there is no guarantee that the fuel will evaporate completely in the atmosphere. Any contamination, including the risks this may pose to the population and the environment, must be avoided at all costs.

1. In view of the toxic nature of these substances, what political, technical or legal measures does the Commission support to prevent fuel from being jettisoned by commercial and military aircraft, and what joint initiatives is the Commission pursuing with Member States?
2. Given the likely health and environmental risks, is the Commission taking steps to reduce the number of toxic substances in aircraft fuel?