

ORAL QUESTION H-0583/03

for Question Time at the part-session in October 2003  
pursuant to Rule 43 of the Rules of Procedure  
by Chantal Cauquil  
to the Commission

Subject: Transport of hazardous products

On Thursday 18 September 2003, a serious accident happened in Hérault, in the South of France. A lorry carrying a load of 12 000 litres of thioglycolic acid, produced by Atofina, overturned and fell into the Illouvre river where it runs alongside a winding stretch of RN (national road) 112 between St Pons de Thomières and St Chinian. The driver was seriously injured, and the vats split open, releasing the acid which, as well as polluting the river and surrounding environment, also caused 50 fire-fighters and 17 gendarmes to be hospitalised suffering from headaches, respiratory disturbances, itching and rashes. A deplorable aspect of this accident is that staff of the DDE (Departmental Equipment Directorate), present at the scene, did not have the same 'precautionary principle' applied to them. The load in question was, moreover, being transported between Mourenx, in the Pyrénées Atlantiques department near the Atlantic coast, and the Mediterranean port of Sète, along a section of road where 8 fatalities were recorded between 1995 and 2001, with yet others having occurred since, and where a number of lorries have shed their loads.

What action will the Commission take to end the anarchy governing the transport of hazardous products by road by prohibiting it in favour of safer forms of transport, whether by rail, by inland waterway or by sea?

Tabled: 01.10.2003  
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