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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1303

November 6, 2013

Hon. Thomas E. Perez
Secretary
Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20210

Hon. Joseph A. Main
Assistant Secretary
Mine Safety and Health
Administration
1100 Wilson Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22209

Hon. B. Todd Jones
Director
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco,
Firearms, and Explosives
99 New York Ave., NE
Washington, DC 20226

Dear Secretary Perez, Assistant Secretary Main, and Director Jones:

As the member of Congress representing portions of southwest Chicago, southwest suburban Cook County, and northeast Will County, I write to respectfully request that you open a formal investigation into the reported use of explosives at the Hanson Materials quarry in the Village of McCook, IL, a municipality located in my congressional district. In particular, I am seeking to determine whether an explosion took place at the quarry leading to a magnitude 3.2 seismic event on the afternoon of November 4; ascertain whether laws, regulations, and protocols may have been violated in the course of explosive purchase, storage, use, and disposal at the site; ensure that federal, state, and local governments take the requisite action to address the incident; and facilitate proper procedure and courtesy by the quarry moving forward. I encourage you to consult the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and other relevant agencies as necessary.

As you may be aware, residents in northeastern Illinois felt the earth shake violently for a brief time at 12:35 pm on November 4. Seismologists at USGS believe the magnitude 3.2 seismic event was the result of "a quarry or other near-surface blast." The tremors, which reportedly could be felt in southern Wisconsin, obviously caused alarm among residents of the region and resulted in damage to both residential and commercial property. My constituents who reside in and around McCook already face a number of daily challenges as a consequence of the quarry, including frequent blasting. An event on the scale of November 4, however, is simply unacceptable in such a populated area. What's also problematic is the complete lack of consultation with local officials, authorities, and residents about any increased blasting activity at the quarry.

In order to ensure the safety of life and property in the region, I am asking that you investigate the incident of November 4 and determine any improprieties that occurred at the site. I would also note that a smaller seismic event occurred in 2010 under similar circumstances. For this reason, I would urge you to not necessarily limit your investigation to the events of November 4. I believe that your examination is necessary to ensure proper oversight of the facility, fair recourse to residents for unacceptable actions, and the prevention of future incidents.

Thank you for your consideration of my request. My staff has already been in contact with your respective offices. Attached are several news articles reporting on the incident. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



DANIEL LIPINSKI
Member of Congress

cc: Dr. Suzette Kimball
Acting Director
United States Geological Survey
12201 Sunrise Valley Drive
Reston, VA 20192