



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

APR 29 2002

THE ADMINISTRATOR

The Honorable Rob Portman
U.S. House of Representatives
238 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Portman:

Thank you for your letter of March 25, 2002, encouraging EPA to carefully examine the policy objectives regarding reusable shop towels and other textiles before issuing a proposed regulation for the management of these materials.

At this time, EPA has not determined what, if any, regulatory action may be appropriate for solvent-contaminated shop towels. We are, however, looking carefully at the possibility of providing an exclusion from the definition of solid waste for these materials in response to stakeholder input. The Agency has committed significant resources to resolving this issue. I am hopeful that the following information provides some insight into the Agency's efforts to date.

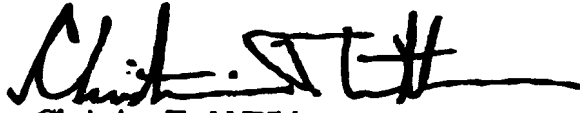
The Agency's efforts on this issue were initiated as a result of petitions from various industries. In particular, small businesses that use either disposable wipes or reusable shop towels in the workplace have requested that EPA revise its regulations for several reasons. They have asked for consistency in requirements that currently differ from state to state and for assurance that these materials will not be subject to the full waste disposal requirements of RCRA's hazardous waste regulations.

EPA's goal is to ensure that solvent contaminated shop towels are managed in an environmentally sound, cost-effective manner that encourages source reduction and recycling of hazardous solvents. In order to address the various viewpoints on the relevant issues, we have met with key stakeholders throughout regulatory development to listen to their concerns and incorporate their comments wherever appropriate. Our efforts have included outreach to industries using these shop towels in their operations, manufacturers of shop towels, launderers, and handlers of used towels. If EPA proposes a rule, the Agency will respond to all public comments in writing and will incorporate suggested changes where appropriate.

In addition to our ongoing stakeholder outreach effort, EPA will continue to analyze the economic impact of any future rule. It has been our policy to assess the rule's likely impact, to engage the potentially regulated entities in a dialogue regarding the rule, and to minimize costs to the extent compatible with the goals of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act.

Again, Thank you again for your letter. We look forward to continuing to work with you and your constituents on this issue. If you have any further questions, please contact me or have your staff contact Veronica Shivers in EPA's Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations at 202-564-3105.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christine Todd Whitman". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Christine Todd Whitman