Chevron Digging Its Own Waste Pit

By Carrie Ellis, Editor, Chem.Info

Only something catastrophic could come from a corporation with a moniker that can be easily manipulated into such URLs as www.texacotoxico.org/eng [1] and www.chevrontoxico.com [2] as intimated by the Amazon Defense Coalition and Amazon Watch [3].

I don’t know how many of you have been following what some environmentalists are calling Amazon Chernobyl, but one word keeps reverberating in my head — ridiculous. Maybe even unbelievable. Actually, I could probably go as far as audacious.

Ditching more than 18 billion gallons of toxic waste into rainforest water reserves. Walking out on more than 900 waste pits. An estimated excess of 1,401 cancer deaths. Escalating childhood leukemia. An abnormal number of miscarriages. Increasing instances of birth defects amongst mothers exposed to contaminated water. Perhaps even killing off entire indigenous groups.

These environmental atrocities are coming to fruition at a time when companies are being lauded for going green, yet this oil giant still insists on playing the Ecuadorian bully — with a past that continues to prove it’s pockmarked with oil waste dumping and other major environmental transgressions.

If you find yourself lacking (or me a bit over-the-top), however, in the wealth of resources recording this landmark case, please visit the following links for more information on the noxious storm gathering over not only the Amazon, but Chevron, too:

- Chevron Corp. [4]
- Amazon Crude On “60 Minutes” – Read [5]; Watch [6]
- Chevron Board Member Armacost Tied To Conflict Of Interest Over Cancer Study In Ecuador’s Amazon [7]
- Chevron Annual Meeting Heats Up Over Ecuador Suit [8]
- Chevron Falls Short On Disclosure Obligations Relating To $27 Billion [9]
- Amazon Watch Warned That Board of Directors Is Shirking Its Fiduciary Duties On Ecuador [10]
- Chevron Management Dealt Major Blow With CalPERS Announcement On Ecuador [11]
- When Chevron Hires Ex-Reporter To Investigate Pollution, Chevron Looks Good [12]
- The True Cost Of Chevron [13]
- Chevron Lawyer Stumbles In “60 Minutes” Interview Over

Ecuador Oil Contamination [14]

What I find more gruesome than Chevron’s lack of self-responsibility is that it has smeared this already ugly, historically expensive environmental case with Eddie Haskell-like PR and marketing schemes, including a junk documentary to thwart bad press from “60 Minutes” and other thinly veiled ploys, designed to foil shareholders and drum up public support.

"I have makeup on, and there's naturally occurring oil on my face. Doesn't mean that I'm going to get sick from it," Chevron in-house lawyer and spokesperson Sylvia Garrigo said defensively during her “60 Minutes” interview.

OK, forget gruesome. It’s too leading and perhaps pejorative. Let’s go with strategically confused … Maybe even sadistically delusional. I feel like this industry giant is injuring a reputation more than anything. (Well, I guess not as much as its dignity.) Didn’t “Leave It To Beaver” always teach us that you may as well own up to your mistakes rather than try to chicken-scratch ‘em like Haskell? To be a standup guy and admit wrongdoing when you’re inevitably caught? Must we return to the teacup episode?

Chevron is elbows-deep in the most expensive — around $27 billion — environmental lawsuit this world has ever known. Yet it seems like the more negative attention that is brought on the company, the dirtier it plays and the more conniving its schemes. The company is even under public investigation for fraud. Then repeat.

One of the more recent faux pas was when Chevron enlisted Samuel Armacost — a board of directors member with $3.1 million invested — to disprove the incriminating data amassed by court-appointed scientists in Ecuador. The company financed a so-called independent study of cancer rates in the affected areas to discredit these scientists.

Turns out, the study fudged numbers by taking into account only those cancer victims who had death certificates. With an admittedly limited knowledge of information sharing amongst rainforest inhabitants, I never pictured indigenous groups to be big on paper trails, especially considering most have never had the opportunity to see a doctor. The simple fact that Chevron appointed Armacost further undermines its integrity, while reducing our willingness to believe its other claims.

It’s not that I don’t know most of the articles I referenced also come from parties with a vested interest in the case at hand. It’s not that I want things to be the way they are either. It’s just that these environmental groups back up their argument, while big business continues to flounder. If I were accused of false reporting or grammatical murder, I’d take a moment to reflect. Then, upon not being able to validate my ineptitude, I’d print a retraction or devise how to otherwise make amends.

Mind you, I realize much more is at stake for Chevron than its name (namely, a lot

of money), but where does the oil giant envision itself if it even were to sidestep this well-documented historical case? The company would inevitably remain tainted with a loss of both social and environmental credibility. Or maybe just respect.

My words of advice: Play nice and take responsibility for your actions before you alienate everyone. While your biggest proponents may initially grimace, your biggest opponents must admit that at least you’re doing your part to fix any oversights. With this upfront approach, you may be able to not only avoid incurring lawsuits in the first place, but also a bad name and a fraudulent reputation.

What’s your take? Sound off by e-mailing me at carrie.ellis@advantagemedia.com [15].

Comments:

Kudos to you for having the guts to write about this travesty. For years the mainstream me
this caused by US and multinational companies in the developing countries, and the chemi
shunned any publicity implicating one of its own in these sorts of activities.

Perhaps if more people see the price we in the US exact from others so that we can live ou
begin to take a more reasonable share of the planet's resources.

Nicely written and well documented.

Thanks,

Kim L. Ground

We have Chevron stock and are embarrassed by this gross negligence of the company. Pe
stock holders they will cut back on bonuses and use some of the profits to clean up their m
Warming expert Mr. Gore and his buddies are not in this fight.
Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention.

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http://www.chem.info/blogs/2009/06/chevron-digging-its-own-waste-pit?qt-most_popular=1

Links:
[1] http://www.texacotoxico.org/eng/
[2] http://www.chevrontoxico.com
[3] http://www.amazonwatch.org
[4] http://www.chevron.com
[5] http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/05/01/60minutes/main4983549.shtml

[6] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XrRfYLkAwfI
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