WV Governor Signs Storage Tank Safety Bill

SARAH PLUMMER, Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — West Virginia Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin has signed legislation imposing new safeguards on above-ground storage tanks and water systems in response to a Jan. 9 chemical spill in Charleston.

The Water Resources Protection Act regulates storage tanks like the one that leaked at Freedom Industries, contaminating the drinking water of 300,000 West Virginians.

The new law will require all above-ground tanks in critical areas to be registered with the Department of Environmental Protection and to have annual inspections. The measure also requires that the Bureau for Public Health work with federal agencies to gather medical information to track long-term health effects associated with the spill.

In addition, the bill requires all water utilities to have a written emergency plan by July 2015, and West Virginia American Water must install an early monitoring system at its Elk River plant.

"The Elk River chemical spill has made us all, in our communities and across our nation, take a closer look at our infrastructure, especially around our waterways," Tomblin said. "We have focused our efforts on the health and safety of those impacted."

At a press conference Tuesday, House Speaker Tim Miley noted the bill's bipartisan nature.

Senate Majority Leader John Unger said this legislation is the first he has seen pass both the House and Senate unanimously twice.

"When people put aside their partisanship, put aside their special interests and focus on the public interest, this is a good example of all branches of government working together," Unger said.

He dedicated the bill to the public for keeping "a close public eye on the whole process and motivating us to do better."

Source URL (retrieved on *09/17/2014 - 3:23am*):
http://www.chem.info/news/2014/04/wv-governor-signs-storage-tank-safety-bill