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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Nurses support rule to reduce Ethylene Oxide (EtO) exposure from chemical plants

Washington, D.C.-- Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced [a final rule](#) that will provide critical health protections to hundreds of thousands of people living near chemical plants. The final rule will dramatically reduce the numbers of people with elevated risk in communities near chemical plants that emit ethylene oxide (EtO) or chloroprene by 96 percent. EPA reports that [chronic exposure through inhaling EtO](#) is associated with the development of cancers of white blood cells, such as non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and breast cancer, and that [acute inhalation of EtO](#) can also contribute to respiratory issues, headaches, nausea, vomiting, and fatigue.

In response to the announcement of the rule, the Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments Executive Director Katie Huffling, DNP, RN, CNM, FAAN issued the following statement:

“EPA’s risk assessment determined that EtO is a carcinogen back in 2016. As nurses prioritizing the health of patients and communities, we are thrilled to now see that serious actionable steps are being undertaken to protect communities from EtO exposure. As communities have been at the forefront of raising awareness around the health harms of EtO, the fenceline monitoring included in this rule will help communities by increasing transparency and creating a mechanism for holding owners and operators accountable to make repairs when EtO levels exceed certain concentrations. We will continue to advocate and support action toward phasing out EtO and [continue to promote the use of less toxic alternatives to sterilization](#)”

When fully implemented, [EPA states](#) that final rule will reduce more than 6,200 tons a year of over 100 air toxics, including EtO and chloroprene, from covered equipment and processes at plants in Texas and Louisiana and will include reduce air toxics at plants in other parts of the country such as Delaware, New Jersey, and the Ohio River Valley. EPA expects the rule to reduce harm to several groups of people who are often overburdened by air pollution including children, who are particularly vulnerable as their bodies experience frequent cell divisions, making them [susceptible to DNA mutations caused by EtO exposure](#). In addition to cutting EtO emissions by nearly 54 tons

per year and cutting chloroprene emissions by nearly 14 tons per year, the rule will also reduce more than 23,000 tons of smog-forming emissions each year.

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The Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments is the only national nursing organization focused solely on the intersection of health and the environment. The mission of the Alliance is to promote healthy people and healthy environments by educating and leading the nursing profession, advancing research, incorporating evidence-based practice, and influencing policy.

<http://enviRN.org>