

## MDN : Rationalization and Other Evils

David L. Linhardt, publisher MDN-Rejected.com June 10, 2005

The Midland Daily News has a very obvious bias towards The Dow Chemical Company that has resulted in a substantial reduction in the impact of information that disputes some of the company's claims about dioxin.

One of the more subtle pitfalls that the MDN has not avoided is "*rationalization*" – explanations or excuses made through reasoning.

### *Continue Editorial*

I recently sent a letter to Ms. Jennifer Andersen, MDN publisher, indicating that the following statement made by Dow was incorrect:

*"Based on earlier health studies, other than chloracne, there is no indication of increased risk of health effects in Dow workers related to dioxin exposure."*  
[MDN-Rejected.com emphasis added]

In support of my comments, I provided Ms. Andersen a copy of a correspondence that Dow's Legal Department sent to the EPA in 1998 reporting increased incidence of stomach cancer, prostate cancer and Cancers-ill defined sites in Midland plant employees exposed to pesticide plant dioxins.

The MDN thanked me for the information and indicated that its staff was aware of the 1998 correspondence and that, in fact, it reported the information in two articles in the past 10 months.

Let me quote from the two articles that the MDN cited:

1. "In the 1998, under the Toxic Substances Control Act, the company reported to the [EPA] that studies of its workers show increased levels of prostate cancer among those exposed to dioxins. A stronger correlation between dioxin exposure and stomach cancer also was found." – 07/18/2004
2. "In 1998, the company reported to the [EPA] that studies of its workers show increased levels of prostate cancer among those exposed to dioxins. A stronger correlation between dioxin exposure and stomach cancer also was found." – 01/30/05

A pretty straightforward reporting of facts – where's the bias?

Let me amend statement No. 2 to include all the information reported to the EPA:

"In 1998, the company reported to the [EPA] that studies of its workers show increased levels of prostate cancer – **2.0 to 2.6 times higher** – among those exposed to dioxins. A stronger correlation – **a 300% increase** – between dioxin exposure and stomach cancer also was found. **Cancer from ill-defined or unspecified sites was 1.4 times**

**higher than the US population. All increased levels of prostate, stomach and ill-defined cancers were statistically significant.”**

A little editorial word-smithing to hold down the length of an article is appropriate but not when the accuracy of the reporting is changed dramatically.

Has the MDN rationalized its bias towards Dow? I think so – as evidenced by the fact that the MDN provided these two articles as proof of “complete reporting”. Despite the exclusion of vital information, The MDN may disagree.