



WATER

Planet Green / By Rachel Cernansky

Dow Chemical Is Sponsoring a Run for Water -- Activists Fight Back

The company says it is part of its efforts to help the 1.2 billion who lack access to clean water but Dow has contaminated water supplies for many of those people.

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Dow Chemical is sponsoring a Live Earth Run for Water next week, which the company says is part of its efforts to help the 1.2 billion people across the globe that lack access to clean water.

Dow, however, has contaminated water supplies for many of those 1.2 billion people—it is affiliated with dioxin pollution in Michigan water (that the EPA is now paying to clean up), dolphin deaths in Texas, and horrific human injuries from South Africa to New Zealand.

The company's reputation has also still not recovered from the Bhopal disaster, the 1984 gas leak from a pesticide plant in Bhopal, India, that killed up to 16,000 people from gas-related diseases and injured countless others. (At the time, the plant was owned by Union Carbide, which was acquired by Dow in 2001. Stockholders tried to stop the deal because of liabilities for Bhopal, but the acquisition went ahead.) More than 25 years later, 390 tons of toxic chemicals continue to leak out from the abandoned site and pollute the region's groundwater, and Dow has not taken responsibility for the cleanup.

Side note: In a hoax by The Yes Men in 2004, a "Dow representative" took "responsibility" for the disaster on BBC television, and more recently, they have created B'eau Pal—water with unique qualities that "come from 25 years of slow-leaching toxins at the site of the world's largest industrial accident." Love The Yes Men.

The International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal points out that if people have the time and dedication to run six miles, then the point of what they're running for probably matters to them. They've created a petition to the organizers of Live Earth protesting Dow's involvement in a day of action for clean water in light of these unresolved issues.

How to help

Really helping the global problem of access to clean water requires global solutions. Many water supplies are contaminated because of industrial plants—so as with all other environmental issues, a crucial part of any holistic solution should be to cut down on our consumption.

More directly, and for communities where industry is not the main source of contaminants—and there are many—there are organizations dedicated exclusively to providing clean water to communities around the world, such as Water for People and charity:water, and they could use some support.