

Homeland chemical security

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The slow implementation of the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards (CFATS) in the USA as part of homeland security and anti-terrorism measures is leaving chemical plants vulnerable and putting at risk the safety of American citizens, according to research published in the *International Journal of Critical Infrastructures*.

Maria Rooijackers and Abdul-Akeem Sadiq of the School of Public and Environmental Affairs, at Indiana University-Purdue University, in Indianapolis, explain that post-9/11 efforts to safeguard the chemical sector gave the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) the authority to regulate the safety and security of US chemical facilities. In April 2007, DHS added an interim final rule, the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards (CFATS), but the latest information suggests that very few chemical facilities have completed the necessary implementations.

The team suggests that the chemical industry and DHS must now work more closely together before it is too late to ensure the safety and security of the US population. They also add that communities should not wait for CFATS to be implemented before developing their own preparedness and response plans in anticipation of possible chemical disasters in the future, whether caused by terrorism or accident.

The chemical sector is a vital part of the US economy, the team says, based on 2009 data it represents almost 2 percent of US [gross domestic product](#) (GDP) and is the nation's greatest exporter. The industry also contributes materials to a vast array of other industries from automotive

and aeronautics to agriculture and healthcare. The chemical industry employs almost 1 million people directly and sustains an additional 5.5 million jobs in other sectors. Moreover, it is officially considered to be part of the USA's critical infrastructure as stated in the National Infrastructure Protection Plan (NIPP) of 2009 being essential to sustenance of the economy and government itself.

The prominence and importance of the [chemical industry](#) as well as the proximity of its facilities to densely populated areas make it a particularly vulnerable target for terrorist attack, hence the DHS interest and rules. Indeed, four of the fifteen National Planning Scenarios are related to chemical attacks, the team points out. However, of the 3468 chemical facilities given their final tier designations under CFATS in 2007, a mere 40 of these had had their plans approved by 2013 and the pace of adoption and implement is yet to pick up.

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