RTP digital action: phone script
Mon 12th Aug 2024

Some guidelines:

- Please be respectful to people - no threats, no shouting.
- The aim is to block the phone lines and be inconvenient, rather than as a tactic of worker outreach. It is likely that you won't convince someone that they should quit their jobs and that's ok!
- Don't take this too personally - chances are, they've had a fair few phone calls already that day which were misleading or antagonising. They might hang up or be disproportionately frustrated at you, and that's ok! You can choose to ring again, or just move on the another number.

If they answer the phone, you can:

1. *Talk to them about why you're calling*
2. *Talk to them to stall for time and hold the line*
3. *Hang up*

Option 1:
Hello, is that [insert name here] speaking?

I'm ringing to check if you're aware that you work for the single largest carbon emitter in the UK? The company you work for is responsible for driving environmental racism and causing huge amounts of harm to communities, forests and biodiversity.

Are these issues things that you're aware of?

[if they don't hang up keep talking and keep them on the phone line as long as you can:]

Drax's pellet mills in the Southern US are causing devastating harm to people's health, leaving majority black, poor communities unable to breathe in their own homes.

The issue is so bad that the UK government has been accused of funding environmental racism because of the subsidies it provides Drax. To quote directly about the impacts of a Drax pellet facility:

[quote as much of the following as you can to stall for time]

"Residents said their health had declined after Drax began operations in the town in 2014, and complained of breathing difficulties requiring inhalers or oxygen tanks, experiencing dizzy spells, rashes, nosebleeds and occasional burning sensations and irritated eyes when standing

outdoors.

“Drax needs to clean up their mess,” said one resident, who says her health began to decline five years ago. “We started getting sick after they put that plant down there and we didn’t know where it was coming from.”

*S*he suffers from asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and chronic bronchitis, and has to use medical oxygen, a nebuliser, an inhaler and a nasal spray to manage her conditions. “Sometimes I experience nose bleeding,” she added, “and when I gargle… I spit blood out.”

Another nearby resident said the air in the area can smell like “rotten flesh”. She also suffers from COPD, and said she noticed her health decline soon after she moved back onto her great-grandparents’ land in the area three years ago.

“I mentioned to my husband on numerous occasions that there was something in the air, there had to be something in the air because my breathing was horrible and it still is.”

“We’re suffering, she added. “The smell is horrible. It gets to the point where you can’t breathe. You would have to smell it in order to know what it’s like.”

In 2020, the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality fined Drax’s Amite BioEnergy pellet plant $2.5m for breaking its VOC emission limits since 2016.

Amite had been pumping out VOCs at an average of 796 tonnes per year, which is more than three times its permitted limit of 249 tonnes per year and nearly five times the estimate of the plant’s emissions that Drax had initially given officials.

To quote an assistant professor in epidemiology, “we know these VOCs are cancer causing.”

What do you think about that? Was it something you were aware of? What do you think about the role of Drax's PR department in perpetuating this atrocity?

[let them respond]

You might have seen that there is a whistleblower form that is being circulated around Drax employees. Employees are being encouraged to use a secure email to anonymously upload anything that might be of interest to journalists or campaigners. Is that something you might be interested in?

Other talking points to mention if you have time:

- *Drax is not renewable energy - biomass emits just as much carbon dioxide as coal, locking in disastrous global heating.*
- *Drax creates damaging levels of air pollution next to its wood pellet factories in the Southern US..*

Option 2:
This one requires some acting! Things you might want to try:

- Pretending to be a news outlet looking (you can go big e.g. BBC or small e.g. Yorkshire Post)
- Concerned resident in Selby or local area around Drax (e.g. about the protestors or about air pollution from power station)
- Misdirected general enquiry about Drax (e.g. jobs vacancies, is biomass renewable, where do you get your trees from)
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Be creative!!!! But here's an example of how that might go and a few pointers:

Hello, is this [insert name here] speaking? How are you today? I'm calling form [insert your media outlet] and I'd like to ask you a few questions in light of the recent events occurring around the Drax site if that's okay?

[Start with a few softer ball question to make them comfier]

- What are your thoughts on the police's response to protestors?
- What was the protest all about? Do you know what it was about Drax that they were protesting about?
- How would you respond to the claim that Drax is the largest single carbon emitter in the UK, and so a legitimate target for climate protest?

[Feel free to move into some harder questions to try keep them on the line]

- I guess the climate protesters would argue that communities in Mississippi and the Southern US are facing health issues and are unable to breathe because of Drax's pellet facilities - what would you say in response to that?
- The other angle would be time scales - I think I read that it takes 40-100 years for trees to grow to maturity and draw down a comparable amount of carbon to those cut down. So if we're cutting down and burning whole forests now, releasing all that carbon into the atmosphere, the maths doesn't really add up does it?
- What about the democratic element? Shouldn't everyone have the opportunity to dissent, especially when it is their money that is ending up in Drax's account as subsidies.

Option 3:
When they answer, hang up. This means you don't have to speak but it still holds up the line while it's ringing. You can also do this under your desk at work!