South Coast AQMD

FACT SHEET

U.S. EPA Report on Air Toxic Risk in Cerritos, CA

Background

- Earlier this week, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released results from their most recent National Air Toxics Assessment (NATA). The report estimates toxic risk for each census tract in the Unites States using a national emissions database combined with modeling of exposures. This current NATA report estimates risk from emissions in the year 2002.
- While there is considerable uncertainty in the EPA emissions data, the report identified a single census tract in Cerritos as having a cancer risk of 1244 in one million, one of the highest in the country.
- According to the NATA report, one chemical from one facility accounted for over 95% of this risk. The facility is Heraeus Metal Processing (formerly PGP Industries Inc.) and the chemical was Hydrazine.
- EPA has classified Hydrazine as a probable human carcinogen and is considered a Hazardous Air Pollutant (HAP). It also has other serious acute and chronic (non-cancer) effects. It is a colorless liquid with an odor similar to ammonia and it is reactive in air. It has been used as a rocket fuel, and has several other industrial uses.
- Previous air toxics studies by AQMD (MATES) have shown that the vast majority of cancer risk is due to exposure to diesel particulate matter (PM). Many areas in southern California have cancer risks greater than 1200 in one million. The NATA report did not consider diesel PM in their cancer risk estimates, and the MATES studies did not consider Hydrazine.
- A 1200 in one million risk is unacceptably high and AQMD is working hard to reduce exposure to all air toxics.

AQMD Actions

- The AQMD has initiated an investigation of the emissions data used in the NATA report to assess its accuracy. Some of the data in the NATA report may be from the early 1990s or earlier.
- AQMD engineers and inspectors have been dispatched to the Heraeus facility to conduct inspections, records searches, and source tests to identify potential Hydrazine emissions. It has been confirmed that the facility currently uses Hydrazine.
- Hydrazine is used as a reducing agent in an industrial process and should react and be converted to less harmful products. The process that uses Hydrazine at Heraeus is a closed system that is vented to pollution control devices. These control systems should also reduce Hydrazine emissions.

Future AQMD Actions

- Ambient air, stack, and process samples will be taken from the Heraeus facility as well as the surrounding community. They will be analyzed for the presence of Hydrazine.
- Investigations to assess the emissions data used by the NATA report will continue. This and all other work will be done in consultation and cooperation with EPA.
- AQMD will coordinate with the Cerritos City Manager to hold a Town Hall Meeting in Cerritos to communicate all findings and results. This will occur within the next two weeks.
- If the risk from Hydrazine is confirmed, AQMD will apply existing regulations or develop new regulations to reduce risk to the community from this chemical.
- If errors or gaps in the toxics emissions inventories are identified, AQMD will work quickly to improve emissions reporting procedures and requirements.

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