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File - Krummrich Plant

Monsanto to spend $20 million to reduce wastewater pollution

By KEITH BRUMLEY
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SAUGET — Monsanto Chemical Co. will spend $20 million in the next two years to cut wastewater pollution to meet anticipated federal and village limits on chemical discharges from the W.G. Krummrich Plant, the company announced Tuesday.

"The program will help position the plant for the future and is in keeping with the company's commitment to continuously improve its environmental performance," said William J. Boyle Jr., manager of the W.G. Krummrich Plant.

The program would focus on preventing the generation of waste through recycling and reuse of chemicals.

The chemicals targeted include 11 organic chemicals regulated by federal pre-treatment guidelines that take effect in November 1990. The plant will also cut amounts of six other chemicals that are not regulated, said Max McCombs, superintendent of environmental affairs at the plant.

The list also includes ammonia. The village this year will limit the discharge of ammonia from the Krummrich Plant. McCombs said Monsanto will try to recover up to 91 percent of the ammonia currently lost in the wastewater stream, up from the current 40 percent.

Boyle said the changes will add $4.5 million to the current $7 million annual cost of wastewater treatment at the plant.

About $1 million has been spent so far for engineering work but no changes in manufacturing processes have been made and no new equipment is in place, McCombs said.

The village has said that increased pre-treatment is needed in order for the American Bottoms Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility to comply with current and anticipated discharge limits. The village provides primary and secondary sewage treatment for Monsanto and other industries. The plant discharges an average of 4 million gallons of wastewater daily for primary and secondary sewage treatment by the village.

Last year, several members of Greenpeace briefly plugged the discharge pipe from the American Bottoms plant to the river to call attention to the waste. The activists said the plant was releasing large amounts of toxic waste into the river.

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But American Bottoms officials said that all waste entering the plant was treated before it was released.

Boyle said the pre-treatment program is part of a continuing process of reducing emissions from the Krummrich Plant to the environment. "Monsanto has been an important employer on the east side. And we plan to stay. This is one step. This is not an end point by any means," Boyle said.

Additionally, the plant will begin in September to use a $5 million manufacturing process for paradichlorobenzene that will almost eliminate the nearly 350 tons of the chemical that annually escapes into the air and wastewater with the present, 40-year-old process. Paradichlorobenzene is used in mothballs and as a deodorizer.

Project engineer Kent Nesvik said the chemical will be manufactured in a closed system and that water will no longer be used in the process.

The plant currently produces 24 million pounds of paradichlorobenzene annually and would produce 33 million pounds a year with the new system. The technology was developed by the Japanese, Nesvik said.

The Krummrich Plant produces chemicals that are sold to other industries for manufacture of various products.

About 750 women and men work at the plant.

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