

Plants' Emissions Related To Cancer

By ROBIN TONER
Of The Daily Mail Staff

The West Virginia Citizen Action Group has identified 29 suspected or known cancer-causing chemicals and 94 other "highly toxic" chemicals in the emissions of nine Kanawha Valley chemical plants.

CAG's findings were based on a 1977 chemical inventory compiled by the West Virginia Air Pollution Control Commission from emissions data submitted by area chemical companies.

In a letter to APCC Director Carl Beard, the environmental group said several of the companies had in many cases failed to indicate to APCC that chemicals they were emitting were carcinogens — cancer causing agents.

CAG also found that the FMC Nitro plant had failed to list any of the pollutants it emits, as requested by the APCC. Beard said today that the plant reported it was "super-clean," or not emitting any chemical pollutants.

The environmental group urged Beard to set emission standards on the toxic and carcinogenic chemicals without waiting for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which has set such standards for only a few pollutants.

An EPA study, released in draft form in June, identified 43 known or suspected carcinogens in the air of the Kanawha Valley. It identified a total of 135 volatile organic compounds in the air here which could have health effects at certain levels.

However, EPA officials said at the time that none of those chemicals were found at concentrations high enough to endanger health, based on current research.

Beard said today his agency "hasn't forgotten" the problems of chemical pollutants, "but there's just not enough hands to push on that right now."

His agency is currently struggling to prepare a plan to comply with federal clean air standards imposed by the 1977 amendments to the Clean Air Act. The state runs a danger of losing federal funds unless the plan is submitted within three months.

"As soon as we get breathing room, we're going to get moving (on chemical pollutants)," Beard said.

CAG's report was released at a public meeting on air pollution Thursday night at the West Virginia Lung Association headquarters in Charleston. About 20 people attended the meeting, which was organized by CAG to form a coalition of chemical workers and environmentalists to work for improvement

of the Kanawha Valley's air.

At least two chemical workers, who requested anonymity, attended the meeting.

One chemical worker reported that most co-workers feared environmental groups as threats to their livelihoods. "The biggest fear is that the company will close down and leave. The company is threatening that all the time," the worker said.

The worker said chemical plant employees are often overcome by chemicals on the job. "The tendency of environmental groups has been to emphasize long range effects. Chemical workers are more concerned with the day-to-day effects. You should focus on the immediate health and safety of the worker," the worker said.

Lee Neilan, a Charleston physician, said she had requested the county board of education to take action on the conditions at South Charleston Junior High School, where her daughter is a student. She argued the children at the school were exposed to considerable health risks because of their proximity to the South Charleston FMC plant.

Much of the concern expressed by citizens at the meeting revolved around the FMC plant at South Charleston. The group, chaired by Mary Kay Cole, is planning to prepare and distribute a leaflet on air pollution problems. The leaflet, to be distributed in St. Albans, South Charleston and Nitro, will include the names and telephone numbers of chemical plant management to contact when citizens wish to lodge complaints, organizers said.

The chemical plants included in the APCC survey and CAG's study included Diamond Shamrock, Belle; Dupont, Belle; Union Carbide, South Charleston; FMC, South Charleston; Union Carbide Technical Center; Union Carbide, Institute; Monsanto, Nitro; Fike Chemicals, Nitro; and Avtex, Nitro.

Hot Line



Q. Is Arch Moore for or against the Davis Power Project, in the Canaan Valley?

M.B.
Winfield

A. A spokesman at Moore's campaign headquarters says the former governor is for the project.

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