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ENVIRONMENT: PLASTICS INDUSTRY ASKS WITHDRAWAL
OF PROPOSED CHANGE OF VINYL CHLORIDE STANDARD

Ralph L. Harding, Jr., president of the Society of the Plastics Industry, today asked the Environmental Protection Agency to withdraw its proposed changes in the national air emissions standard for vinyl chloride.

Harding, testifying at an open meeting called by EPA, said the agency's proposed amendments were "not responsible" and totally unnecessary to protect public health. Harding told EPA that the entire process surrounding the agency's proposed revisions in the vinyl chloride standard "reflect nothing more than capitulation (by EPA) because of a law suit filed by an environmentalist group."

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Harding said EPA's original standard for vinyl chloride, promulgated on October 21, 1976, was "developed openly, in consultation with all interested parties, and was an example of responsible agency action."

The most striking aspect of the proposed new regulations, he said, "is the absence of any justification for changing a standard which has been in effect now for only nine months." SPI has been unable to find any new health data, nor has EPA cited any new data as the basis for revising the standard, Harding said.

Under the 1976 standard, emissions would have been reduced to trace amounts less than 2 parts per billion, SPI said. "We doubt that the concentrations will even be that high," Harding said, adding that given the small amounts of vinyl chloride involved, "why change the standard so soon without some evidence of need?"

Harding called for a rejection of the proposed standard-revisions. Instead, he said, EPA should establish a "periodic review process under which any changes to the standard can be considered rationally in the same open manner in which the initial standard was developed," and pledged plastics industry cooperation in efforts to regulate vinyl chloride in a "responsible manner."

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**Vinyl Chloride Triggering
Another Environmental Fight**

By Bradley Graham
Washington Post Staff Writer

Vinyl chloride, the cancer-causing chemical which menaces the plastics industry, again has roused industrialists and environmentalists to fierce debate over when enough is enough.

In open hearings yesterday, industry spokesmen angrily denounced as unnecessary, useless and too costly strict new standards to limit the emission of vinyl chloride.

But an attorney for the Environmental Defense Fund, the leading proponent of federal action, claimed the

new regulations—the second set of emission standards to be strapped on the industry in nine months—are necessary to jolt plastic manufacturers into developing more efficient clean-air technology.

Until 1974, vinyl chloride was accepted as a cheap and almost innocuous gas used as a propellant for insecticides and hair sprays and as a base ingredient in a common plastic (polyvinyl chloride) found in flooring, car upholstery, wrapping, pipes, phonograph records, film and other products.

In recent months, however, the chemical has been blamed for the cancer death of at least a dozen industrial workers. Several studies suggest prolonged exposure to vinyl chloride can cause a rare and fatal form of liver cancer in the hundreds of employees who work in, and 4.6 million people who live within five miles of, the nation's 58 manufacturing plants.

Standards proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency would reduce the acceptable amount of chloride from 10 to 5 parts per million in air or water discharges.

Though the reduction appears significant, Ralph Harding, president of the Society of the Plastics Industry, complained it would do little to improve air quality because of the relatively larger amount of gas that would continue to escape through uncontrolled points in the manufacturing process.