

355 Lexington Avenue
New York, New York 10017
(212) 573 9400

Contact: Jerry Blizin
(202) 638-2800

NEW EPA STANDARDS FOR VCM
ARE UNNECESSARY, SPI SAYS

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WASHINGTON (July 19) --Proposed Environmental Protection Agency amendments to the national air emissions standard for vinyl chloride were characterized today as "not responsible" and totally unnecessary to protect public health by Ralph L. Harding, Jr., president of the Society of the Plastics Industry. Harding asked EPA to withdraw the proposed changes.

Testifying at an "open meeting" called by EPA at the plastics industry's request, Harding told EPA officials 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." SPI contended the "open meeting" does not meet the need for a full public hearing which SPI requested.

According to Harding, the original EPA standard on vinyl chloride promulgated on Oct. 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, Harding said, "is the absence of any justification for changing a standard which has been in effect now for only nine months." He said SPI has been unable to find any new health

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data nor has the EPA cited any as the basis for revising the standard.

Further, the SPI spokesman said, it isn't known whether vinyl chloride will exist in the ambient air within a five mile radius of a plant. Under the 1976 standard, emissions would have been reduced to trace amounts less than 2 parts per billion.

"We doubt that the concentrations will even be that high," Harding said, adding that given the infinitesimally small amounts of vinyl chloride involved, "why change the standard so soon without some evidence of need?"

(At the time the original standard was proposed, EPA commented "there is no proof of adverse effects on man at the concentration of vinyl chloride now found in the air near these plants..." EPA said reducing emissions, however, was a prudent move to reduce the chance of illness.)

Harding said the schedule proposed for comments on the revised standard is "much too short" and contains some radical provisions which would interpose EPA regulation over "new" resins and prevent on-site plant expansion.

He called for a rejection of the proposed standard revisions and establishment of 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." Harding pledged industry would cooperate with efforts to regulate vinyl chloride in a "responsible manner."

Also testifying on behalf of SPI's manufacturing technology committee was W.C. Holbrook, who pointed out that -- among other things -- "EPA's proposed amendments would make obsolete FEA's energy efficiency goals" and add materially to the industry's energy consumption.

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Moreover, Holbrook described the proposed EPA amendments as having "no technical basis and are conflicting and confusing." He said the SPI committee has been "severely restricted by EPA's inability to explain the content of the proposed amendments or the basis for proposing them."