

Firm Unable to Meet Vinyl Chloride Guides

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Shintech, Inc., a petrochemical firm, has told the Texas Air Control Board that the company cannot, using current technology, reduce emissions of vinyl chloride at its Freeport plant as required by a board permit.

However, the firm told the board it has developed a new process that promises to significantly reduce discharges of vinyl chloride, a gas linked to liver cancer deaths in other parts of the country and in Europe.

Shintech's Freeport plant makes polyvinyl chloride, a powdery substance used to manufacture thousands of plastic products. Gaseous vinyl chloride is discharged in the production of polyvinyl chloride.

Roger Tower, permits supervisor in the air board's Houston office, said Thursday that the company has asked for permission to install a pilot plant to test the new process, called oxyphotolysis.

"We're going to have to try to evaluate something we don't know much about," Tower said.

Shintech last November received an operating permit from the board for the Freeport plant. The permit allowed discharges of 225 tons of vinyl chloride a year, but required the company to complete by June 30 research on methods of reducing vinyl chloride emissions.

The permit also required the control methods to be installed at the plant by Nov. 30, 1976. The permit was issued after the company told the air board it

needed a quick decision on its permit application to avoid refinancing a loan.

Tower said the company last week submitted a report on its research concluding that vinyl chloride emissions at the plant cannot be lowered using available technology.

The company said that the new oxyphotolysis process could cut the emissions to 25 per cent of their current level, Tower said.

The company, he said, also promised to meet whatever standards the federal Environmental Protection Agency sets for vinyl chloride. The EPA is expected to publish proposed standards for the chemical later this month.

Shintech wants to start a pilot oxyphotolysis program this summer and have the system completely installed by the 1976 deadline, Tower said.

He said, "We have to determine whether this is an acceptable program. We're still looking at it. The emission level (proposed by Shintech) is probably satisfactory. The question is whether they can make oxyphotolysis work."

The air board staff will probably decide in a week or two what action to take on the Shintech proposal, Tower said.

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