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Airborne vinyl chloride to be checked

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By HAROLD SCARLETT
Post Environment Writer

An exhaustive sampling program will start in July to determine how much cancer-linked vinyl chloride may be escaping into Houston's air.

The pollution sampling by the Texas Air Control Board will better define whether the carcinogenic chemical is a threat to the public, air board engineer Jim Tarr said.

Tarr told of the sampling project Thursday during a talk on vinyl chloride before a local group of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers.

He explained the sampling results

could lead to the state agency adopting "a different approach" from the federal Environmental Protection Agency in controlling vinyl chloride.

"We want to be sure that what EPA is doing will be adequate for the Texas situation," Tarr said.

In his talk, Tarr was critical of several aspects of the EPA's vinyl chloride regulations. He said the federal controls do not apply to all vinyl chloride emissions, do not adequately deal with accidental emissions during plant upsets, and do not control the disposal of liquid and organic wastes that could emit vinyl chloride.

Tarr said the program will involve seven sampling stations taking 24-hour

composite samples for at least six months.

Three of the stations will be in the Deer Park stretch of the Ship Channel, he said, with two stations in Texas City and two in Freeport.

The Houston area is one of the nation's biggest production centers of vinyl chloride, and all three of the sampling centers contain plants that make or process the chemical.

Vinyl chloride was discovered in early 1974 to have caused a rare liver cancer in some plant workers. It has since been tentatively linked to other cancers, birth defects and chromosome damage.

Tarr said in his talk that three medi-

cal experts have said independently that the maximum acceptable exposure of the public to vinyl chloride over a prolonged period should be 10 parts per billion.

He said there are indications that some area residents have been exposed to higher concentrations than this - at least until recent plant cleanups.

Some industry engineers at the meeting suggested to Tarr that strict new limits on vinyl chloride emissions are a costly case of overkill.

Tarr, however, said that in view of the apparent multiple health effects from the chemical, he is "comfortable" with the strict controls.

Copies: Mack Fowler
Saad Ishmal

The above is for your information and will give you some idea of why we are being asked to set up such an elaborate carbon control for the tanks containing the chlorinated solvent waste.

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