

1P
United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Communications, Education,
And Public Affairs
(1703)



Environmental News

FOR RELEASE: TUESDAY, MAY 16, 2000

Following negotiations between EPA and 3M, the company today announced that it will voluntarily phase out and find substitutes for perfluorooctanyl sulfonate (PFOS) chemistry used to produce a range of products, including some of their Scotchgard lines. 3M data supplied to EPA indicated that these chemicals are very persistent in the environment, have a strong tendency to accumulate in human and animal tissues and could potentially pose a risk to human health and the environment over the long term. EPA supports the company's plans to phase out and develop substitutes by year's end for the production of their involved products.

"Today's phaseout announcement by 3M will ensure that future exposure to these chemicals will be eliminated, and public health and the environment will be protected," said EPA Administrator Carol M. Browner. "EPA will work with the company on the development of substitutes to ensure that those chemicals are safe for the environment. 3M deserves great credit for identifying this problem and coming forward voluntarily."

PFOS chemicals are used to produce a range of products from fire fighting foams, coatings for fabrics, leather, and some paper products, to industrial uses such as mist suppressants in acid baths. The company is continuing a major research effort on these chemicals to enhance the understanding of any potential risks that may be associated with this class of chemicals. EPA will also be evaluating the chemicals to determine how individuals and the environment are exposed and what potential adverse effects may exist. If future regulatory actions are required, EPA will take them.

At present, 3M is the only US manufacturer of PFOS. EPA will be contacting foreign governments and other chemical manufacturers, both domestically and internationally, to seek their support for a voluntary phaseout of PFOS and related chemicals.

For more information, contact Martha Casey at 202-564-7842.

Bonnie Piper, Acting Director
Office of Media Relations

R-69