ENVIRONMENTALISTS URGE TOUGHER AIR STANDARDS FOR CHEMICAL PLANTS

The National Air Quality Commission has been urged by West Virginia environmental groups to consider tighter air pollution controls for chemical plants. Appearing before the commission at Los Angeles hearings this month, Ed Light, staff scientist for the Appalachian Regional Defense Fund, said cancer rates in Kanawha County, W. Va., are considerably higher than the national average and contended rates are directly linked to "chemical plant air pollution."

Light said about 55% of the county's residents live in areas "impacted by chemical plant emissions. "Contending that the Clean Air Act has "evolved into a philosophy that chemicals are innocent until proven guilty," Light urged the commission to recommend limiting all such emissions "by technology based standards unless proven innocuous under all synergistic and chronic exposure conditions."

Light, who spoke on behalf of other environmental groups, said "reasonably available control technology" should be required for all "large" stationary sources of volatile organics, and suggested Congress consider amending Sections 112 and 111 of the air act to enhance EPA's authority.

In contrast, Noble Robbins of the Manufacturing Chemists Association, said 90% control of the industry's hydrocarbon emissions would involve a capital outlay of only $1-billion, but that an additional 3% control demanded by EPA would cost $2.9-billion. He said EPA requirements are unfair since the chemical industry is responsible for only about 3% of all hydrocarbon emissions nationally.

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TOXIC MATERIALS NEWS IN BRIEF

West German Minister of Health Antje Huber has introduced a bill that would authorzie West German authorities to require extensive testing of new chemical compounds for their environmental effects. Animal tests for risks such as carcinogenicity are foreseen. Substances already in production would not be affected. Huber estimates the bill's requirements would cost the chemical industry about $20-million per year.

Michigan officials have filed suit in Ingham County Court asking that Hooker Chemical and Plastics Corp. be ordered to pay for removing toxic wastes dumped at the firm's Muskegon plant since 1951. Suit does not specify the amount sought for cleanup, but state officials estimate it could cost up to $15-million. After filing the suit, Michigan Attorney General Frank Kelley noted that materials at the site are similar to those Hooker deposited in the Love Canal, Niagara Falls, N.Y.

EPA Deputy Administrator Barbara Blum has established a work group to coordinate a program for consolidating the issuance of environmental permits governing water pollution, solid waste and underground waste injection. Aim is to provide single application form and to issue a consolidated permit. Regional offices are to designate, by Oct. 1, 1979, one organizational unit to handle permits issued by EPA. For more information contact Leonard Miller (202) 755-2545.

Exposure to polychlorinated biphenyls increases the accumulation of cadmium in mink kidneys, according to research reported in the No. 1, 1979, issue of the journal of the human environment published by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. Researchers conclude that PCBs "behave synergistically" to influence the amount of cadmium accumulated in the kidneys and that the amount of cadmium found in the body is not always an indication of exposure levels but could be the result of simultaneous exposure to PCBS.

Following Department of Agriculture decision to permit continued use of 2,4,5-T to control underbrush in national forests, Rep. Don Edwards (D.-Calif.) has introduced legislation to ban use of the substance, plus other chemicals containing dioxin, on national forest lands. Edwards' bill would not prohibit use of 2,4,5-T by the private sector. EPA is currently studying the safety of 2,4,5-T.

Technology Assessment and Pollution Control Committee of EPA's Science Advisory Board will hold a meeting March 7-9 to discuss the adequacy of technology for controlling toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes. Meeting will be held at EPA's Industrial Environmental Research Lab, Cincinnati, Ohio. Anyone wishing to attend should call Lloyd Taylor or Rita Hagerty, (703) 557-7721.

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