

New rules crack down on mill wastes

Dec. 5, 1984

Edmonton
Journal

Pulp and paper targeted

The Canadian Press

Ottawa

The federal government took aim at chemicals harmful to humans in new regulations announced Wednesday to slash toxic pollutants and other wastes pulp mills flush into waterways.

Environment Minister Jean Charest said the measures will require \$3 billion in changes in the way the industry processes pulp and paper but won't eliminate pollution.

"This does offer a very marked improvement in the quality of the environment around pulp and paper mills," he said at a news conference.

Even tougher regulations could follow in two years after more scientific research, he said.

Pulp-mill pollution has become a hot issue as far away as Europe and the industry fears it could face devastating boycotts.

"I think the industry realizes there is no choice," said Charest.

Main targets of the regulations are dioxins and furans — complex compounds harmful to human health — and other chemicals known as organochlorines.

The government says it is the first in the world to bring in regulations to prevent the formation of dioxins and furans in pulp mills.

Starting in 1994, any measurable level of the two compounds will be

deemed a violation of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

The maximum penalty under the act is \$1 million per day, although fines are usually far lower.

The regulations also include a ban on the use of contaminated defoamers and woodchips, which lead to the creation of dioxins and furans.

The government also plans to amend regulations under the Fisheries Act to set tougher limits on other wastes discharged by all mills in Canada.

Current regulations to protect fish around mills apply to the 13 mills built since 1971.

But guidelines cover the 90 per cent of mills built before 1971, when regulations were introduced.

The government expects wastes to be cut by more than 60 per cent — or about 600,000 tonnes a year.

The regulations take effect in mid-February after a 60-day period for public review.

A federal study this year said the industry could remain competitive in world markets, despite tough pollution controls.

The regulations were developed in consultation with the industry, provincial governments and environmental groups.

Charest also announced he will strengthen the Environment Department's enforcement program by boosting staff by 136 people.

Studies see new risk in pulp mill effluent

ERIN ELLIS
Journal Staff Writer

Edmonton

New studies on Canadian pulp mills show unidentified chemicals may be damaging fish, a top federal scientist said Wednesday.

Although the federal government introduced long-awaited standards calling for the virtual elimination of dangerous dioxins and furans by 1994, it may not solve all the problems associated with pulp mill effluent, said John Carey, director of river research for Environment Canada's water research institute in Burlington, Ont.

Carey has been part of studies looking at three pulp mills in Ontario and Quebec which found physical changes in fish living downstream from the mills.

Smaller gonad size and decreased amounts of sex hormones — which indicate potential effects on the ability to reproduce — were found in fish near the mills.

But these changes don't appear to be linked to the amount of chlorinated organic pollution produced by the mills, said Carey. Even a mill which would meet new federal standards caused changes in the fish downstream, he said.

Environment Minister Jean Charest, who introduced the new standards Wednesday, said the amount of chlorine-contaminated chemicals leaving Canadian pulp mills would be reduced as companies eliminate dioxins and furans, considered the two most dangerous members of organo-chlorine group of compounds.

But Charest said the government decided not to require specific limits on all chlorinated organics because scientific research is still trying to determine if it is the biggest culprit in pulp mill effluent.

The new regulations will have no effect on Alberta's three operating bleached kraft pulp mills, which say they are already meeting the federal standards.

"We're more stringent now than any federal standards," said Jim Dau of Alberta Environment.

But environmentalists say the federal government hasn't gone far enough with the new regulations.

"If Canada is going to remain in the marketplace they've got to get rid of all chlorine compounds in their pulp bleaching. Europeans are simply not going to buy product bleached with chlorine," said Louis Schmittroth, spokesman for Friends of the Athabasca.