



Deer Park Community Advisory Council

Summary of February 25, 2013 Meeting

DPCAC Discusses Health Impacts from Environmental Exposure

Over its 23 year history, Deer Park Community Advisory Council has often talked about the potential for health effects from living in an industrialized area. Most recently, members reviewed mortality data and heard how the state environmental agency uses monitoring and emissions data to protect public health. A review that night of some ways plants track employee health will be followed by a presentation on industrial hygiene at the March 25 meeting of the forum for community-industry dialogue. Visitors are welcome.

Vital statistics obtained from the Texas Department of State Health Services showed that, from 2001 to 2011, the causes of death in Deer Park were similar to those in the State of Texas. The top two causes were heart disease and cancer in both cases. (See www.deerparkcac.org.)

Tara Capobianco, Technical Specialist in the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) Air Permits Division and coordinator of TCEQ's Air Pollutant Watch List (APWL) program said TCEQ evaluates more than 7 million air monitoring data points annually. Texas has more air monitors than any other state: more than 70 ozone monitors and 90 monitors checking for air toxics.

Monitoring data show the concentrations of air pollutants in the ambient (outdoor) air and enable TCEQ to assess the potential impact on the general public by comparing these concentrations to levels set by regulatory agencies primarily for health purposes. EPA has set National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for six common criteria pollutants, including ozone. TCEQ has developed Air Monitoring Comparison Values (AMCVs) for individual air toxics, such as benzene and styrene. If monitoring data show an area is not attaining one or more NAAQS, the state must develop a State Implementation Plan (SIP) to show how it will do so. If a certain area shows persistent, elevated concentrations of specific air toxics, TCEQ may place it on the watch list. The greater Houston area attains the NAAQS for all criteria pollutants except for ozone. Of the 10 current APWL sites in Texas, two are local: Galena Park for benzene and Lynchburg Ferry for styrene odors. Progress has been significant.

In an APWL area, TCEQ may require additional monitoring, conduct more inspections, increase its scrutiny of air permit applications, and negotiate with companies to reduce their emissions further. This does not mean the company is out of compliance. Emissions data help the agency determine where elevated concentrations of a chemical may be coming from. Emissions inventories may show reductions in emissions from industry sources, but air monitoring data measure what actually is in the air to see whether concentrations of those pollutants are at levels of concern. (See www.deerparkcac.org for Capobianco's slides.)

DPCAC meets again on Mon. March 25, 2013 at 6:00 p.m. to learn about industrial hygiene. For details and an invitation, contact Rod Hartley at 281/817-3340.

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