



State of Louisiana

Department of Environmental Quality



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Toxic air standard for butadiene exceeds annual standard

BATON ROUGE – Air monitors at the Department of Environmental Quality’s South Scotlandville and Port Allen sites indicate elevated levels of toxic air pollutant 1,3-butadiene. The readings at both sites exceeded the Louisiana toxic air pollutant ambient air standard for this compound.

1,3-butadiene is recognized as a carcinogen and exposure to even low levels over a prolonged period of time is a cause for concern. DEQ is working with the Department of Health and Hospitals to determine the health implications of the exceedances. Based on preliminary data, the agencies do not believe there is an imminent public health threat. But, DHH will work with DEQ to conduct further analysis.

DEQ Secretary Mike McDaniel said, “This is a potentially serious matter we are acting on immediately, we want to identify and address the source or sources.” DEQ has called on four Baton Rouge-area industrial plants to arrange meetings within 10 days to discuss the issue. The four plants, which are sources of 1,3-butadiene, are DSM Copolymer, ExxonMobil Chemical Plant, ExxonMobil Refinery and Intercontinental Terminals. “These facilities may all be operating within permitted limits, in which case, we may have to revisit the permits and reduce emission levels,” McDaniel said.

“DEQ has been monitoring this situation throughout the summer and the last reading put us over the annual standard,” McDaniel said. “We are also concerned about spikes of 1,3-butadiene that we registered during our intense monitoring during the ozone season. We are taking necessary action to find out why we are seeing these elevated levels. We will be reviewing the facilities’ permitted limits and any non-routine releases. If non-compliance has contributed to the exceedances, it will be dealt with appropriately.”

The Louisiana toxic air pollutant ambient air standard for 1,3-butadiene is .42 parts per billion by volume. The data from the South Scotlandville site, located on U.S. Highway 190 near the old Mississippi River Bridge, had an annual average of .80 ppbv for 2004. The Port Allen site, located near La. Highway 1 and U.S. Highway 190, had an annual reading of .47 ppbv for the same time period.

Sources of 1,3-butadiene, which is a colorless gas with a slight gasoline smell, include petroleum refineries and synthetic rubber manufacturers. It is also found in the exhaust of automobiles and trucks.

DEQ operates a network of toxic air pollutant ambient air monitors throughout the state. Each year, the sample data is averaged and compared to the toxic air pollutant ambient air standard established in the state environmental quality regulations. The South Scotlandville site and Port Allen site are the only locations that exceeded any of the Louisiana ambient air standards in 2004. McDaniel also directed that air toxics data statewide be reviewed to ensure that there are not similar problems elsewhere.

In 1990 DEQ was the first state to adopt air quality standards for toxic air pollutants. Currently only two other states besides Louisiana have such standards, which go above and beyond EPA’s air quality standards. The DEQ standards for the compounds are based on risks associated with long-term exposure.