



State of Louisiana

Department of Environmental Quality



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ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

DEQ STEPS UP INVESTIGATION INTO RISE OF OZONE LEVELS

(Baton Rouge) – Seventeen industrial sites located along the Mississippi River Baton Rouge corridor were issued Administrative Orders today from the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). The orders are part of an effort launched by DEQ to collect scientific data aimed at developing a better understanding of potential sources that may have contributed to ozone exceedances recorded in the Baton Rouge area on September 11, 2002 and July 18 and August 18 of the current year.

The orders require the companies “to preserve any and all documentation of any and all activities, including but not limited to fugitive leaks, tank cleanings, turnaround activities, startups, shutdowns, malfunctions and/or upsets,” that may have led to releases of chemicals that DEQ scientists have determined were present in well-above normal proportions on the days around when the exceedances occurred.

The issuance of the administrative orders is the latest in a series of steps taken by DEQ to zero in on what may be causing ozone to form at such rapid levels. “Improving air quality is a continuous learning process and we need to constantly refine our approach to keep pace with changing circumstances. The preservation of this data will afford our air quality experts the opportunity to further explore why ozone levels are climbing on days when meteorological data would indicate otherwise,” said R. Bruce Hammatt, Assistant Secretary for the DEQ Office of Environmental Compliance.

(more)

Ozone pollution is caused by a series of chemical reactions that take place in the presence of sunlight on hot days when the air is stagnant and there is little or no wind. Industry, utilities, certain businesses, cars, trucks, buses, ships and airplanes all contribute to ozone formation.

The industrial locations receiving the administrative orders are Exxon Mobil Corporation's Baton Rouge refinery as well as its chemical, plastics, resin finishing and polyolefins plants; DSM Copolymer, Inc's Baton Rouge and Addis locations; Formosa Plastics Corporation; Placid Refining Company in Port Allen; Enterprise Products Operating, L.P., Baton Rouge Fractionator and Splitter Units; Intercontinental Terminals Company in Anchorage; Georgia Gulf Chemicals and Vinyls, LLC and Dow Chemical both in Plaquemine; and Crompton Manufacturing, Williams Olefins, LLC, Shell Chemical and BASF Corporation in Geismar. These industrial locations must furnish any required information within 30 days of receipt of the administrative order.