



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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State meets all air toxics standards for first time

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality is reporting today that Louisiana met all air toxic standards at all air-monitoring sites in the state for the first time in 2005.

After a thorough review of the data from 16 DEQ air-monitoring sites throughout the state, the department is announcing that the entire state is in compliance with all air toxics ambient air quality standards for the first time since the air toxics program's inception in 1990. Louisiana, which monitors for 60 air toxics, is one of only three states with established ambient air toxics standards. Currently, there are no federal ambient air toxics standards.

The news shows progress for the state's air quality. However, there is still work to do in the five-parish Baton Rouge area because it fails to meet federal guidelines for the criteria air pollutant ozone.

Because of this failure to comply, DEQ initiated an aggressive air-quality campaign for the summer of 2005. The goal was to reduce emissions of highly reactive volatile organic compounds, also known as HRVOCs, which contribute to the formation of ozone. Toward the end of 2004, DEQ issued administrative orders to 15 industries in the Baton Rouge area requiring 22 additional monitors and more internal audits. DEQ also used a HAWK infrared gas imaging camera to look for leaks at facilities, in pipelines, on barges and on railroad tank cars. There were also additional inspections performed throughout the five-parish Baton Rouge area.

Ambient air monitoring data collected from 2005 shows that these efforts met with some success. Decreases in air toxic releases were noticed at the Port Allen and South Scotlandville monitors. Both sites were previously out of compliance with the state air toxics standard for 1,3 butadiene. This pollutant is also one of the more common pollutants associated with ozone formation. In 2005, there was only one significant strike, 100 parts per billion or greater, compared to seven in 2004. There was also a 40 percent total decrease in HRVOCs in the five-parish Baton Rouge area.

"Meeting the ambient air toxics standards is a giant step in the right direction for air quality throughout Louisiana," DEQ Secretary Mike McDaniel said of the department's increased activity. "This proves the perception of Louisiana as a state with poor air quality is not an accurate portrayal. By using the newest tools available to us and with cooperation from industry and the public, we will continue to make progress in improving our air quality. This is evident because of the breakthrough year we had in 2005."

DEQ will continue its monitoring efforts throughout the state and will look to new technologies to continue improving air quality. DEQ is working to acquire a mobile monitoring laboratory which will enable it to conduct local monitoring and evaluate toxic emissions in more locations and closer to emission sources.

For more information on the air quality index visit www.deq.louisiana.gov.

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