

5/12/99

FACT SHEET

FINAL AIR TOXICS RULE FOR POLYETHER POLYOLS PRODUCTION

TODAY'S ACTION...

- ◆ The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is issuing a final regulation to reduce emissions of toxic air pollutants from the polyether polyols industry. Air toxics, also known as hazardous air pollutants, are those pollutants known or suspected of causing cancer and/or other serious health effects.
- ◆ Polyether polyols are used in making lubricants, adhesives, sealants, cosmetics, soaps, and feedstock polymers for urethanes production. Air toxics can be emitted at several points along the manufacturing process. EPA's rule establishes emission limits and control efficiency requirements for the following phases of the manufacturing process: storage tanks, process vents, equipment leaks, and wastewater treatment systems.
- ◆ EPA developed today's rule in close partnership with major stakeholders, including industry representatives and State and local agencies.

WHAT ARE THE HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS?

- ◆ EPA's rule will reduce emissions of a number of air toxics (including ethylene oxide, propylene oxide, toluene, and hexane) from facilities producing polyether polyols. Ethylene oxide is a probable human carcinogen that causes adverse reproductive and developmental effects. The other three pollutants also cause cancer and/or some other adverse health effect.
- ◆ EPA's rule will reduce emissions of air toxics from the manufacture of polyether polyols by approximately 2,000 tons annually, representing a 50 percent reduction from current levels. Additionally, many of these toxic chemicals are also "volatile organic compounds," which contribute to the formation of ground-level ozone, the primary constituent of smog. Therefore, when implemented, this rule will also help reduce ground-level ozone.

BACKGROUND

- ◆ Under the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, EPA is required to regulate sources of 188 listed toxic air pollutants. (Note that this list originally contained 189 pollutants, but EPA has subsequently removed the chemical caprolactum from the list.) On July 16, 1992, EPA published a list of industrial source categories that emit one or more of these air toxics. For listed categories of "major" sources (those that emit 10 tons/year or more of a listed pollutant or 25 tons/year or more of a combination of pollutants), the Clean Air Act requires EPA to develop standards that require the application of stringent air pollution controls, known as maximum achievable control technology (MACT).

- ◆ EPA's published list of source categories to be regulated includes major sources that manufacture polyether polyols.
- ◆ EPA issued the proposed rule for polyether polyols production in September 1997, and allowed an opportunity for the public to comment on the proposed standards. EPA considered the comments and incorporated changes into the final rule, as appropriate.

WHAT DOES EPA'S RULE REQUIRE?

- ◆ Emissions of air toxics can occur at several points in the manufacture of polyether polyols. EPA's rule establishes either emission limits or control efficiency requirements for the following phases of the manufacturing process: storage tanks, process vents, equipment leaks, and wastewater treatment systems.
- ◆ The monitoring, recordkeeping and reporting requirements outlined in the rule are similar to those required for other EPA air toxics regulations. For example, the rule requires facilities to demonstrate compliance with the emission standards by monitoring their control devices and performing daily record keeping.

HOW DOES EPA'S RULE PROVIDE FLEXIBILITY TO INDUSTRY AND PROMOTE POLLUTION PREVENTION?

- ◆ EPA's rule provides flexibility to industry by providing a choice of compliance options for process vent emission controls. Currently, most facilities control process emissions from polyether polyols manufacturing by installing control devices. Today's action promotes the concept of "pollution prevention" by allowing a process change alternative to this type of control.

WHO WILL BE AFFECTED BY THE RULE?

- ◆ There are about 80 polyether polyols manufacturing facilities nationwide that will be affected by the rule. About half of these facilities have already installed air pollution controls that will help them meet the requirements of today's action.

HOW MUCH WILL THE RULE COST?

- ◆ In total, EPA estimates the capital cost of the rule for all affected facilities to be about \$10.2 million (approximately \$128,000 per facility). EPA estimates the total annual cost of the final rule to be about \$7.7 million for existing and new facilities (approximately \$96,000 per facility).
- ◆ EPA expects that the actual cost of compliance will be less than projected because of the potential to use common control devices; upgrade existing control devices; use other less expensive control technologies; and implement pollution prevention technologies.

- ◆ The price of polyether polyols products (i.e. lubricants, adhesives, sealants, cosmetics, soaps, and polymers for urethanes production) for consumers is projected to increase less than one percent as a result of today's action.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- ◆ Interested parties can download the rule from EPA's web site on the Internet under "recent actions" at the following address: (<http://www.epa.gov/ttn/oarpg>). For further information about today's rule, contact Mr. David Svendsgaard of EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards at (919) 541-2380.
- ◆ EPA's Office of Air and Radiation's homepage on the Internet contains a wide range of information on the air toxics program, as well as many other air pollution programs and issues. The Office of Air and Radiation's home page address is: <http://www.epa.gov/oar>.