

Understanding and reducing TCE health risks

Help evaluate the use of trichloroethylene, and identify the potential health impacts of air emissions on communities.

What's the issue?

Trichloroethylene (TCE) is a solvent used to degrease metal parts in such industries as plating, machine shops, and manufacturing. Breathing TCE, especially at high levels or over long periods, can cause negative health effects.

Recently, a manufacturing facility in White Bear Township was cited for releasing TCE at harmful levels into the air over a long period, prompting health and environmental concerns.

Proposal

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) propose a \$786,000 biennial Environmental Fund ongoing appropriation for FY2020. The agencies will use the funds to further evaluate the use of TCE around Minnesota and identify its potential health impacts on communities. MPCA and MDH staff will evaluate facilities with air permits around the state that use and emit TCE by:

- Assessing each facility's potential health risks based on location, TCE emissions levels, environmental factors, pollution control equipment, and permit conditions
- Ranking facilities based on the determined risks

MPCA and MDH will work with regulated facilities and others to reduce or eliminate TCE use and, if appropriate, increase regulatory oversight. This may include:

- Inspecting and auditing regulated facilities
- Working with existing organizations such as the University of Minnesota's Minnesota Technical Assistance Program (MNTAP) to assist regulated facilities in phasing out harmful chemicals
- Updating and reissuing air permits, if appropriate
- Issuing compliance agreements or enforcement documents, as necessary
- Requiring additional facility monitoring and site assessments, as necessary



Chemical storage tanks

In communities where there are significant potential public-health impacts, the MPCA and MDH will work with the community on developing outreach and communication and health screening tools, including:

- Health registries — Community members register to receive information on regulated facilities, emissions data, and health issues
- Existing screening tools — The MDH's Birth Defect Registry and the Cancer Surveillance System can help uncover community health trends
- Additional health assessments — Assessing drinking water and testing private wells, as appropriate

Why is it important?

Many communities in Minnesota are dealing with the environmental and health impacts of long-used industrial chemicals. Minnesotans want to know what is being released into the air in their communities. This proposal would help reduce the use of TCE around the state and address public-health concerns. Risk identification, education and regulatory efforts, and partnership work will be particularly emphasized in communities of color or those with economic disparities or dense populations.

For more information

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