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Board Approves Strategic Toxic Air Reduction Program To Protect Public Health, Enhance Quality of Life

LOUISVILLE (June 21, 2005) – The Louisville Metro Air Pollution Control District Board today unanimously approved a package of regulations aimed at reducing toxic chemicals from Louisville’s air and improving public health.

The Strategic Toxic Air Reduction (STAR) Program is a multi-year effort that will require companies that release higher levels of toxic chemicals into the air to significantly reduce emissions to better protect citizens’ health and enhance quality of life.

“Citizens will be able to breathe easier because of these reasonable, responsible improvements,” said Mayor Jerry Abramson, who developed the framework for the program. “Additionally, other cities won’t be able to use Louisville’s high air toxic risks against us in the competition for jobs and companies.”

Louisville’s health exposure risk from airborne toxic chemicals ranked among the highest in the Southeastern United States, according to data reported by companies to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The Board considered 21 separate amendments and approved 11 of the amendments. The District’s Board is made up of seven volunteer citizen representatives.

The new set of regulations focuses first on reducing the levels of 18 toxic chemicals that have been proven through extensive air monitoring to exceed the federal health risk goal – a 1 in 1 million risk of developing cancer from lifetime exposure.

The STAR Program primarily affects 170 companies of Louisville’s 32,000 businesses.

Companies with the largest emissions of the 18 toxic chemicals – such as chloroprene, 1,3-butadiene and arsenic – must begin reporting information to the Louisville Metro Air Pollution Control District by April 2006 to determine if they exceed the health risk goal.

By 2011, those companies must lower their toxic emissions of the 18 chemicals to meet the goal or prove to the APCD Board they are using the best available technology to lower emissions as much as possible. The new regulations include a public process for companies to seek approval of an extension to meet the new goals.

The District conducted more than 60 public meetings with approximately 1,300 people and responded to hundreds of questions from stakeholders since Abramson unveiled the program in September 2004. The final proposal includes scores of changes recommended by citizens, company representatives, health advocates and neighborhood groups.

The need for action was based on results of an extensive air monitoring study released in 2003 by the West Jefferson County Community Task Force. The study found 18 toxic chemicals present in Louisville's air at levels well above the health risk goal.

"Today's action by the District's Board has been in the making for decades. I am proud of the hard work by the District's staff, the commitment to our community by our Board members, and the leadership of Mayor Abramson to approve this focused, systematic and reasonable approach to protect public health," said APCD Director Art Williams.

Other details of the STAR Program:

- Requires approximately 170 companies that emit the largest amounts of chemicals to conduct modeling to determine if emissions exceed the health risk goal for 37 targeted chemicals – the 18 toxic chemicals already proven to exceed health risk goal and another 19 chemicals that may exceed the new goal based on aggregate data supplied to the EPA by local companies
- Sets a timetable – based on the companies' emission levels and the chemicals released – of between 2007 and 2012 for companies to reduce toxic emissions to meet the health risk goal
- Uses state-of-the-art air monitoring equipment to ensure modeling accuracy
- Requires the District to develop an action plan and present it to the Board by June 2007 to address toxic air emissions from non-industrial sources across the county

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