# DENKA: THE PATH FORWARD

Denka, at a site formerly operated by DuPont, manufactures the chemical chloroprene which is used in the manufacture of neoprene synthetic rubber. EPA reclassified chloroprene as a likely carcinogen in 2010. That reclassification was reflected in the National Air Toxics Assessment (NATA) map released by EPA in 2015. The map suggested an elevated risk for cancer in the area around the Denka plant in LaPlace, La. The referenced risk is an incremental estimate of the increased probability of developing cancer over a lifetime as a result of a continuous exposure to chloroprene.

## What is the NATA's purpose?

The purpose of NATA is to identify and prioritize air toxics, emission source types and locations that are of greatest potential concern in terms of contributing to population risk. EPA uses the results of these assessments in many ways, including:

- To work with communities in designing their own local-scale assessments
- To set priorities for improving data in emissions inventories
- To help direct priorities for expanding and improving the network of air toxics monitoring

The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) has worked with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to gather actual monitoring data. NATA uses estimates of emissions and computer models to approximate risks; it is not designed to determine actual health risks to individual people. Six monitors are maintained by EPA in areas adjacent and near the plant. Additionally, Denka maintains six monitors of their own in and around their site. LDEQ receives data from both EPA and Denka monitoring.

## The AOC

Denka voluntarily agreed to take initiatives to reduce plant emissions. LDEQ worked with Denka to craft an Administrative Order on Consent (AOC), an enforceable order of the LDEQ, in which Denka agreed to install a series of new control technology and measures designed to reduce emissions of chloroprene by 85 percent from the facility's 2014 baseline chloroprene emissions. EPA supports LDEQ setting an enforceable schedule to make the agreed upon changes to the facility. Denka has spent more than $25 million to reduce chloroprene emissions.

Under the AOC, emissions reductions devices will be installed on a set schedule, culminating with the installation of the Regenerative Thermal Oxidizer (RTO) by the end of the fourth quarter of 2017. The first two phases have been installed and are operating. Denka has applied for an extension of time for installation of the third phase because of complexities in the engineering design for the modification. The final phase is the installation of the RTO. The RTO is on-site undergoing installation. After the initial phases were installed, LDEQ and EPA saw a downward trend in chloroprene readings at monitors around the Denka site. While the reductions have leveled out, more emissions declines are expected when the remaining phases of the remedy are installed.

## What about .2?

Once the control measures are in place, LDEQ will again assess the emissions at the Denka facility. While there is currently no federal standard for chloroprene emissions, EPA has offered this number as guidance, but .2 micrograms per cubic meter is not a federally enforceable emissions limit.

## Questions about the school

Some LaPlace residents voiced concerns about the 5th Ward School, which is near the Denka plant. The Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) and LDEQ conferred regarding the environmental status at 5th Ward School. LDH officials indicated they have found no reason that children cannot attend the school. Monitoring has shown spikes of chloroprene, not continuous exposure as defined in risk estimates.

## Monitoring results

For EPA's monitoring results, go to https://www.epa.gov/la/laplace-st-john-baptist-parish-louisiana

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