Proposed consent order addresses Honeywell violations

RICHMOND, VA. -- The Department of Environmental Quality is proposing a consent order that addresses violations of water discharge permit conditions at Honeywell’s Hopewell manufacturing facility. The public will be able to comment on the proposed order through September 23, 2015.

The order addresses violations for water quality monitoring and reporting, and releases of chemicals and other materials used by Honeywell: nitric acid, hydroxylamine, methyl ethyl ketoxime, methyl ethyl ketone, ammonium carbonate, caprolactam, cyclohexanone, oil, hydraulic fluid and gasoline. The proposed order includes a $300,000 penalty and requires Honeywell to inspect, repair or replace process sewers at the facility that, due to their deteriorated condition, allowed the release of wastewater into the James River.

One of the most recent spills occurred in November 2014 and resulted in a kill of more than 2,000 fish in Gravelly Run, a tributary of the James River.

To prevent future releases, Honeywell is required to address defects in sumps, trenches and the facility’s sewer system. The cost of corrective action required by the order is estimated to exceed $13 million. In addition to the proposed enforcement action, DEQ and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are coordinating to address natural resource damages caused by past spills.

DEQ has issued 14 enforcement orders to Honeywell since 1990. In addition, a joint consent decree by DEQ and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency was issued to Honeywell in 2013 for air quality violations.

Focusing on corrective action, the proposed consent order requires Honeywell to complete substantial facility upgrades in accordance with a schedule of compliance to improve water quality monitoring and reduce releases at the facility. The State Water Control Board will make a final decision on the consent order at its meeting October 1, 2015.