

## JUSTICE NEWS

### Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, February 12, 2018

### **Shell Chemical LP to Install \$10 Million in Pollution Monitoring and Control Equipment at Norco Chemical Facility in Louisiana to Resolve Alleged Federal and State Clean Air Violations**

The Department of Justice, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) announced a settlement today with Shell Chemical LP that each year will eliminate more than 150 tons of excess emissions of harmful air pollutants from Shell's chemical plant located in Norco, Louisiana, in St. Charles Parish. The settlement resolves allegations that Shell violated the Clean Air Act and State law by failing to properly operate industrial flares at the facility.

The settlement, in the form of a Consent Decree, will require Shell to spend approximately \$10 million to install and operate air pollution control and monitoring technology to reduce harmful air pollution from four industrial flares at the Norco plant. Once fully implemented, the pollution controls required by the settlement are estimated to reduce air emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) by approximately 159 tons per year, and reduce other harmful air pollutants, including benzene, by approximately 18 tons per year.

"We are proud to partner with the State of Louisiana on this important Clean Air Act settlement, which will benefit the citizens of Louisiana," said Acting Assistant Attorney General Jeffrey H. Wood of the Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division. "This agreement is the latest in EPA's and the Justice Department's continuing efforts to work with our state partners to protect the American public from harmful air pollution."

"This settlement will improve air quality for citizens of Louisiana by reducing emissions of harmful air pollution," said EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt. "Today's agreement demonstrates EPA's dedication to working with states to pursue violations of laws that are critical to protecting public health and bring companies into compliance."

"We are committed to working hand-in-hand with our federal partners to reduce air pollution in Louisiana," said LDEQ Secretary Dr. Chuck Carr Brown. "Actions like this one not only serve to clean up the air our citizens breathe, they send a message that we will not tolerate violations of federal or state laws."

VOCs and benzene can seriously harm public health. VOCs are a key component in the formation of smog or ground-level ozone, a pollutant that irritates the lungs, exacerbates diseases such as asthma, and can increase susceptibility to respiratory illnesses, such as pneumonia and bronchitis. Chronic exposure to benzene, which EPA classifies as a carcinogen, can cause numerous health impacts, including leukemia and adverse reproductive effects in women.

The settlement agreement will reduce flaring and improve Shell's flaring practices, reducing emissions at the facility. Industrial flares burn waste gases that otherwise would be released to the atmosphere. Well-operated flares have high "combustion efficiency," meaning they burn nearly all the harmful components in the waste gas, including VOCs and hazardous air pollutants, turning them into water and carbon dioxide.

Under the consent decree, Shell will take steps to minimize the amount of waste gas sent to the flares. Shell will also operate a flare gas recovery system at the facility, which will save the company money by allowing it to use waste gas as fuel; this waste gas would otherwise be sent to the facility's flares. In addition, by installing and maintaining

state-of-the-art monitoring and control technology at its flares, Shell will ensure that the flares are operated at a high combustion efficiency. Finally, Shell will install and maintain monitoring equipment to detect air pollution along the facility fence line and publish the monitoring results on a public website. Shell will also pay civil penalties totaling \$350,000, including \$87,500 for LDEQ.

The consent decree, lodged in the Eastern District Court of Louisiana, is subject to a 30-day federal public comment period, a 45-day State public comment period, and final court approval. The consent decree will be available for viewing at <https://www.justice.gov/enrd/consent-decrees>.

---

**Topic(s):**

Environment

**Press Release Number:**

18-168

**Component(s):**

Environment and Natural Resources Division

*Updated February 12, 2018*