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February 4, 2019

The Honorable Kwame Raoul, Attorney General of Illinois
Illinois Attorney General's Office
500 South Second Street
Springfield, IL 62701

Re: Sterigenics International Incorporated in Willowbrook, Illinois

Dear Attorney General Raoul,

I am writing to you regarding the increasing concern with the continued operation of the Sterigenics facility in Willowbrook, especially in light of recent EPA and independent air quality testing results. This facility is located within one mile of a high school and elementary school.

The Village of La Grange Park stands with the Village of Willowbrook and a growing list of other organizations that are requesting an immediate, temporary shutdown of the facility. This request follows the inconsistent and inconclusive data resulting from the most recent air tests and is necessary until further testing and analysis can be done.

I respectfully request that the State of Illinois file a Section 43 Action of the Illinois EPA, which would result in a temporary restraining order. This action is necessary for public health and welfare until it can be proven that the inside and outside air quality in our area is safe, and that there is no risk to the public.

Your serious consideration and prompt action is appreciated. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Dr. James L. Discipio
President, Village of La Grange Park, Illinois

Cc: Mayor Frank Trilla, Village of Willowbrook

Enclosure: News articles

Trump EPA confirms Sterigenics is emitting alarming levels of cancer-causing gas in Willowbrook but still won't take action



People protesting Sterigenics hold signs at the corner of Spring Road and Commerce Drive on Dec. 15, 2018, in Oak Brook. (John J. Kim/Chicago Tribune)

By Michael Hawthorne
Chicago Tribune

FEBRUARY 6, 2019, 2:05 PM

Sterigenics is still venting ethylene oxide into neighborhoods surrounding its facility in west suburban Willowbrook, according to federal testing that revealed spikes of the volatile, cancer-causing gas higher than concentrations detected before the company installed new pollution-control equipment last year.

But a top Trump administration official told residents on Tuesday that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has no plan for action against the company.

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Nor is the agency any closer to answering urgent questions about long-term health dangers from toxic pollution the company's neighbors have been breathing for more than three decades, most of that time unknowingly.

William Wehrum, the administration's top air official, said the EPA is sticking to its plan to re-evaluate cancer risks in the Willowbrook area after collecting more air samples during the next month and combining the results with computer modeling of pollution emitted by Sterigenics.

Samples analyzed so far suggest that on some days the air monitors are registering other, unknown sources of ethylene oxide, Wehrum said, meaning the agency needs more time to assess the dangers, determine the extent Sterigenics is responsible and figure out how to limit future emissions.

"Does this somehow exonerate Sterigenics? The answer is no," Wehrum said on a conference call dominated by residents urging the EPA to shut down the facility and questioning if the Trump administration is backing away from promises made before the November elections. "We think it's really important to gather enough information so we can make valid and supportable decisions."

The Chicago Tribune first reported that EPA officials began taking a closer look at Sterigenics in late 2017 after determining the cancer risks in one census tract near the facility are more than nine times higher than the national average. By the time the EPA quietly posted its findings online in August, another federal agency had estimated the effects could be significantly more dire, prompting an intense public outcry and demands from local, state and federal lawmakers for an in-depth investigation.

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air samples in late November and
s to higher-than-normal levels of ethylene

One example is Dec. 26, when winds from the southeast blew pollution from Sterigenics toward monitors at Willowbrook Village Hall across the street; a neighborhood nearly 400 yards west of the facility; and Hinsdale South High School, about a half-mile northwest. The highest concentrations of ethylene oxide ranged from 10.5 micrograms per cubic meter of air at Village Hall to 1.17 at the west neighborhood site to 0.566 at the high school monitor.

During the EPA's first round of testing in May, a month before Sterigenics installed additional pollution controls, the highest level recorded in the complex of commercial and government buildings near Sterigenics was 9.1 micrograms per cubic meter.

To put those numbers in perspective, regular exposure to 2.1 micrograms of ethylene oxide per cubic meter of air could trigger more than 6 cases of cancer for every 1,000 people exposed, according to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, an arm of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Federal regulators generally target polluters when local cancer risks are greater than 100 in a million.

"The situation has always been a grave one," the Stop Sterigenics community group said in a statement. "It is time for our federal, state and local government to put the health of the people in front of corporate greed."

Oak Brook-based Sterigenics, owned in part by a private equity firm founded by former Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner, uses ethylene oxide to sterilize medical instruments, pharmaceutical drugs, spices and food.

Shortly after the public first learned about the company's pollution, Sterigenics paid Google to list pro-industry websites at the top of search results for information about ethylene oxide. Using an abbreviation for the chemical, one of the sites claims "EO exists naturally all around us" and doesn't pose health risks at concentrations found near its Willowbrook facility.

On Tuesday, the company had a more muted response to the EPA's latest round of air sampling in the community.

"We acknowledge that there are several readings close to the Willowbrook facility that are higher than background (normally occurring) levels," the company said in a statement. "It remains premature to draw conclusions about long-term health risks from the data."

While the EPA has limited its air sampling to Willowbrook the investigation has national ramifications.

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...000 Americans in 12 states face similar
luding chemical plants, medical device

manufacturers and sterilization facilities owned by Sterigenics or its competitors.

In Illinois alone, nearly 70,000 people live near Sterigenics or two Lake County facilities: Medline Industries in Waukegan and Vantage Specialty Chemicals in Gurnee.

Michael Koerber, a career EPA official overseeing the testing in Willowbrook, said the agency is scrambling to improve how it measures and regulates ethylene oxide. Federal, state and local lawmakers, along with Illinois Atty. Gen. Kwame Raoul and Robert Berlin, the DuPage County state's attorney, aren't willing to wait.

Lawmakers from both political parties have called for the immediate shutdown of Sterigenics, noting that safer sterilization methods are available. Meanwhile, the EPA's inspector general has launched a probe of the Trump administration's actions in response to concerns raised by U.S. Sens. Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth and three fellow Democrats: Reps. Bill Foster, Dan Lipinski and Brad Schneider.

"The citizens of DuPage County should not have to endure this exposure to a known human carcinogen," Raoul and Berlin said in a statement Tuesday. "We will exercise all available legal authority to protect the community."

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This article is related to: Daniel Lipinski, Bill Foster, Sterigenics, Brad Schneider

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WGN News

EPA finds high levels of cancer-causing chemicals near suburban Sterigenics plant

Posted 5:56 PM, February 5, 2019, by Patrick Elwood. Updated at 06:00PM, February 5, 2019

WILLOWBROOK, Ill. -- New data from the EPA released Tuesday reveals higher levels of the cancer-causing agent ethylene oxide near Sterigenics' facility in suburban Willowbrook than earlier studies, prompting calls for its closure from officials and residents who feel the plant is responsible for a litany of medical problems in the community.

A protest outside Gower West School Tuesday is the latest involving residents of this community against Sterigenics, which has been operating in the area since 1984. These folks say the data is irrefutable: the levels of emissions is to a point that people have been getting sick - and some dying - for years.

Sterigenics produces ethylene oxide, which is odorless and is used to make other chemicals like anti-freeze, adhesives, detergents, pesticides and sterilizers for medical equipment.

Residents say the time for talk has long since passed, and that the plant needs to be shut down immediately, and Sterigenics needs to leave the community and face possible civil and criminal consequences.

"All of us have received a death sentence from Sterigenics," protester Meringa Zymancius said. "Enough is enough."

Sterigenics put out a statement, which reads in part:

"monitoring information about ethylene oxide in the Willowbrook area remains limited. It remains premature to draw conclusions about long-term health risks from the data."

State and Federal officials are also now calling for the facility to be shut down.

In a statement, Rep. Dan Lipinski (D- IL 3rd District) called for the EPA to "immediately shut the facility down" after the latest study.

"Almost all of the measurements, taken in late November and early December, are over the EPA action threshold for cancer risk, and the highest number is 350 times the limit," the statement said.

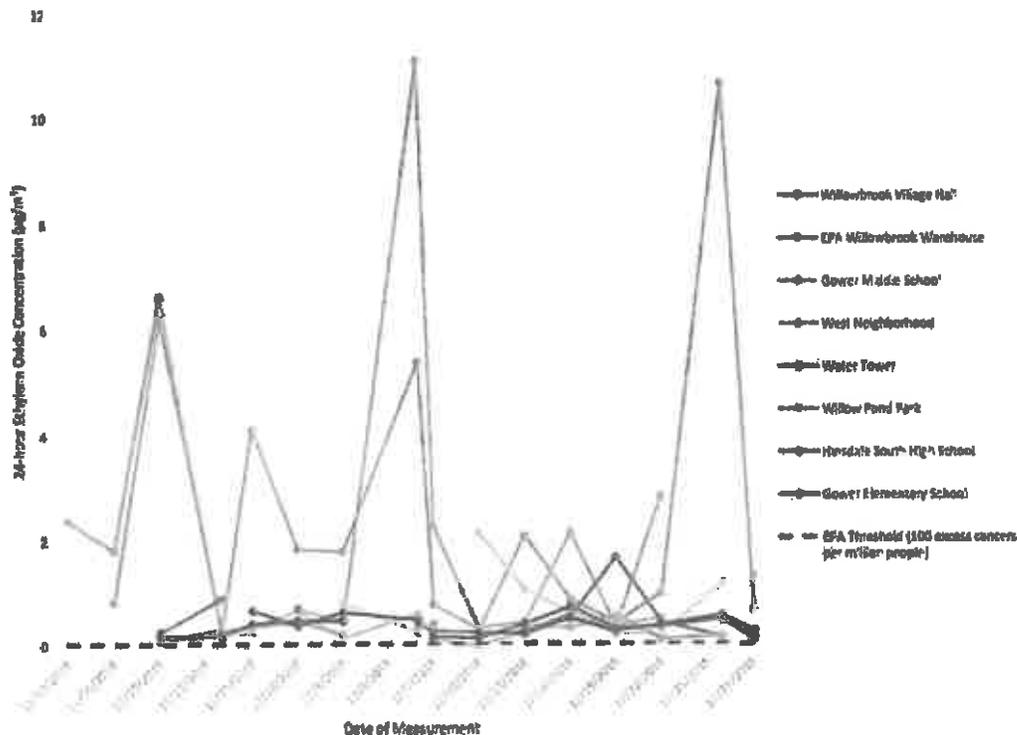


Chart of levels of ethylene oxide found in EPA study, courtesy Rep. Dan Lipinski

Illinois Senator John F. Curran (R-Downers Grove) also called for the facility to be closed.

"Today's EPA results regarding the air quality around Sterigenics demonstrate two things: that the air around this facility is not safe, and that the safeguards put in place by Sterigenics are failing to adequately address these critical issues," Curran said in the statement.

In a joint statement, Attorney General Kwame Raul and DuPage County State's Attorney Robert Berlin said residents, "should not have to endure this exposure to a known human carcinogen."

"We will exercise all available legal authority to protect the community from this exposure," they said in the statement.

Senator Dick Durbin is also in favor of shutting down the plant, weighing in on Twitter Tuesday after the study was released: "As I've said for months, the EPA can no longer sit on its hands. It must take strong steps to protect the health of Illinois residents exposed to this carcinogen. Immediately."

EPA Shares Results Of Sterigenics Air Quality Testing

Monitors detected ethylene oxide in the air at the two sites closest to the Sterigenics facility, the EPA said.

By Andrea Earnest, Patch Staff | Dec 10, 2018 12:54 pm ET



WILLOWBROOK, IL — The U.S. EPA released an update on Dec. 7 which shared results of three days of air quality monitoring in Willowbrook. The EPA said tests were conducted on Nov. 13, 16 and 19.

According to the EPA, results included monitors detecting ethylene oxide in the air at the two sites closest to the Sterigenics facility. However, ethylene oxide was not detected at the six community-oriented sites, which were at schools and in residential areas.

"It is premature to draw conclusions from the data. EPA plans to continue monitoring in the Willowbrook area for three months and will continue to post data as it becomes available," the EPA shared on its [page created for Sterigenics](#).

Congressman Dan Lipinski released a statement after seeing the results from the EPA.

"Despite Sterigenics' claims that it isn't a public health threat, and despite their new pollution control equipment, initial EPA testing has shown significant EtO emissions around the facility," Lipinski said. "While more testing will be occurring, this preliminary data confirms my belief that this plant is a threat to public health and unless data is provided to the contrary, I maintain that this plant should be shut down."

The organization said it will conduct a full assessment of risk from ethylene oxide in Willowbrook, and they expect to be finished with that assessment in spring 2019.

Lipinski Calls For New Testing Method At Sterigenics

Lipinski wants Sterigenics to work with the U.S. and Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to conduct fence line air quality monitoring.

By Andrea Earnest, Patch Staff | Dec 18, 2018 1:04 pm ET



WILLOWBROOK, IL — After a visit to the Willowbrook Sterigenics facility, Congressman Dan Lipinski is calling for new ethylene oxide emissions testing to be done at the facility. According to a release, Lipinski wants Sterigenics to work with the U.S. and Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to conduct fence line air quality monitoring to give a clearer picture of the pollution levels crossing their property boundary.

Recent stack testing from the EPA showed how much EtO is emitted from Sterigenics' scrubber, but not how much potentially leaks out through windows, doors, its heating and air conditioning system, and other sources. According to the EPA, recent results included monitors detecting ethylene oxide in the air at the two sites closest to the Sterigenics facility.

"Yesterday I visited Sterigenics' main Willowbrook facility to see for myself the building and how the plant operates, as well as where the EPA has conducted ambient air testing," Lipinski said in a release. "Following up on this visit and in consultation with outside scientists, today I am calling on Sterigenics to begin — as soon as possible — testing for EtO around the perimeter of its two buildings in Willowbrook."

Lipinski said this testing should be done in conjunction with the EPA and in a transparent manner that can be scientifically verified by an independent third party.

"I continue to stand by my statement that Sterigenics should be shut down unless we can be assured that it is not a public health threat," Lipinski said in a release.

The EPA released another round of air sample results Dec. 17 for EtO around the two Sterigenics facilities. The first set of results released on Dec. 7 showed a high concentration of EtO on Nov. 19 at the two testing sites closest to the plant.

"The new results for testing conducted on Nov. 23 differ from the previous results, but only raised more questions and cannot be said to demonstrate that Sterigenics is not a public health threat," a release from Lipinski's office stated.

According to a release, the EPA's estimate of EtO's cancer risk has been recently updated after 30 years and the risk is now believed to be at least 30 times higher than previously thought. This meant the excess cancer risk around Sterigenics is 300 cancer cases per million people, well above the level of 100 cases per million that the EPA uses as a threshold to take action.