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Ohio EPA Addresses C-8 Concerns

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By Joseph P. Koncelik, Director

Recent media coverage has focused on a chemical commonly referred to as C-8, used by DuPont and other companies worldwide to produce Teflon and other products. This chemical has not historically been regulated, and not a lot is known about it. Studies are underway by U.S. EPA, DuPont and independent parties to learn more about C-8, including how it might affect people's health.

Ohio EPA is relying on U.S. EPA to study C-8. U.S. EPA has greater expertise in this area than we do, including their National Science Advisory Board, a panel of national experts. U.S. EPA is devoting considerable resources to an expedited review of C-8. Since C-8 has been found in the environment in several states, a national approach makes sense. Both Ohio EPA and U.S. EPA will continue to review results provided by DuPont along with other evolving information. We have not and will not rely exclusively on the company for information.

As science evolves, laboratories can detect smaller and smaller amounts of C-8 in water samples. C-8 has been detected in Southeast Ohio in the water systems of Belpre, Pomeroy, Tappers Plains/Chester Regional Water System, and the Little Hocking Water Association. It also may be present in wells serving Earnhart Hill Regional Water and Sewer in Pickaway County and West Carrollton in Montgomery County, though neither has detected C-8 in their treated drinking water.

The presence of C-8 does not necessarily mean it is harmful. The key question is what level of C-8 should cause government officials to take action, or lead citizens to take steps to limit their own exposure.

A panel of national experts convened by West Virginia recommended a preliminary action level of 150 parts per billion, the mathematical equivalent of two and a half minutes in a span of 32 years. All of the detections of C-8 in Ohio public water systems have been far less than this concentration. However, as more information about C-8 has become available, U.S. EPA is currently reviewing the action level for C-8 and may lower it as a precautionary step to protect public health.

Ohio EPA will take whatever action is necessary to be certain that Ohio's public water supplies are not distributing drinking water that exceeds the action level U.S. EPA will establish. This includes sampling water supplies in areas where C-8 is in use and requiring companies, including DuPont, to provide alternate sources of drinking water if warranted.

DuPont has already agreed to finance a program to provide bottled water to customers of the Little Hocking Water Association, which had the highest levels of C-8 detected in Ohio. Those levels are below the current action level, but again, that level is subject to change. Due to the uncertainty surrounding the action level, Ohio EPA believes it would be prudent for customers of the Little Hocking Water Association to use bottled water.

As information about C-8 continues to be developed, Ohio EPA will advise citizens and local officials of new developments.

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