

C'ville claims IEPA 1980 inaction in Cargill case

Pollution — Cargill
By PETE NENNI

Claiming that the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) has dragged its feet in dealing with alleged pollution problems at Cargill, Inc., Carpentersville officials have taken their case to the federal government.

Village officials announced last week that they approached the federal EPA, and requested the agency investigate waste water pollutants that they say Cargill has been discharging into the Fox River since last April.

Village Engineer Carl Caspers said officials from Carpentersville and the Kane County Environmental Division met with EPA attorneys on Feb. 11 and presented the test results of samples taken from a storm water culvert on the river.

The culvert, local officials claim, is Cargill's source of discharge of waste water pollutants, that contains a substance having a high level of oxygen demand.

In such cases, the waste is using up more oxygen in the water than is allowed to maintain aquatic life.

According to the tests for both Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) and Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD), Cargill's leakage of waste materials into the river is above state accepted levels.

Carpentersville officials say state BOD levels are set at 30 parts per million (ppm), but tests show the samples being taken from the culvert near the Cargill plant at 400 ppm, going directly into the river.

COD figures also exceed the state requirements of 60 ppm, with the sample from the culvert averaging 1,000 ppm, which is some 300 ppm greater than the level considered high by the state.

Although the IEPA has been made aware of the situation and has filed a

lawsuit against the company, the discharge into the river has continued, Caspers said.

He said the federal agency agreed to look into the matter to decide if the IEPA was moving rapidly enough and would take action itself after 30 days if it is decided that the state's case is not progressing as it should.

Caspers speculated that that action, if taken, would probably result in a federal lawsuit being filed against Cargill for pollution.

The local officials also asked federal EPA officials to look into the situation at IMC McWhorter, another industrial plant located near the Cargill facility.

Caspers said the resins company is storing chemicals on the plant's grounds, resulting in a possibly hazardous situation.

Roger Grimes, the EPA's attorney for the enforcement division, said he promised to look into the matter and make an independent judgement on whether to get involved.

He said the study is now in the preliminary stages and the test results have been turned over to an EPA engineer and will later be assigned to a lawyer-engineer team that will look into the matter.

A determination will probably not be available for at least three to four weeks. He speculated that at that time, the team could request members of the EPA's surveillance and analysis division gather samples at the plant.

Grimes added, that the information on the IMC situation has been turned over to an inter-divisional committee that examines any possible hazardous dumping situation.

He said a determination may come

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before a Cargill decision because cases relating to hazardous waste dumps are high priority issues.

Carpentersville Trustee Mary Srajer, a long-time opponent to Cargill's alleged pollution practices, said the village did not know where else to turn because "we've had terrible luck with the EPA out here (state agency)."

She said the IEPA was called last April about waste water dumping into the river and although the company was cited on three occasions, "our records show Cargill is dumping everyday."

"I'm sure the IEPA has enforcement capabilities to make them (Cargill) stop (dumping), but they aren't making them stop," Srajer said.

She added, she is planning on sending a letter to the president of the Cargill corporation, advising him of the situation at the Carpentersville plant.

Cargill officials claim there are no problems at their end of the storm sewer line and denied responsibility for the waste water being discharged into the river.

Officials from the IEPA office in Maywood said that they believe that case is being handled well by the Attorney General's office, adding, convictions in cases such as this take time.

Ed Marek, from the IEPA's division of water pollution, said Tuesday that he was not aware that the Carpentersville officials went to the federal EPA, but that it is their prerogative to do so if they wish.

"The U.S. EPA has every right to review the progress in the case, and I'm sure they will be satisfied that the case is moving along smoothly," he said.