

POLLUTION - CARGILL

Cargill matter goes to attorney general

By Mick Zawislak

CARPENTERSVILLE — Continuing complaints have prompted state environmental officials to seek legal controls to curb odors resulting from the manufacturing process at the Cargill Inc. chemical plant.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency announced Monday that it has asked the Illinois Attorney General's Office to help it draw up a compliance plan for Cargill.

"The agency has decided to

seek a formal enforceable odor control plan," said Stan Black, community response analyst for the IEPA. "This looks like it's going to be real action, not window dressing."

The order would be "a very detailed technical agreement with Cargill to cover their entire operation," according to Bharat Mathur, manager of the IEPA's air pollution division permit section.

Such an order would set a timetable for certain pollution

control measures and tests to be conducted. Failure to comply could result in legal action against Cargill.

MATHUR SAID the thrust of the plan would be to "study what is coming out, and how much is coming out, and to study what the impact on community might be." The IEPA has not previously taken or tested air samples from Cargill.

Black said the plan would be different from previous oral

agreements with Cargill in that specific remedies called for by the IEPA would be legally enforceable. Mathur said the order has a high priority with the IEPA.

Black, describing the request that was signed by Michael Hayes, head of the IEPA's air pollution division, said the agency had "decided to take a lot more steps and more effective steps," regarding a "serious odor problem" involving Cargill.

Residents, who have complained of "sweet, sickening"

odors from the plant for more than a decade, have been bombarding the IEPA with formal complaints that include a description of the odor, time of day and other data.

VILLAGE OFFICIALS agreed with residents that the IEPA has been unresponsive to the complaints over the years.

"I want the odor to stop. It's real simple. The EPA has a staff I'm sure can determine what's causing the odors," said Village

Manager Richard Escalante. "We feel this request to the attorney general is long overdue."

Escalante in recent weeks studied IEPA records regarding Cargill. Escalante also met with Hayes and representatives from the attorney general's office regarding continuing odor complaints.

Cargill has been cooperative by shutting down its waste liquid incinerator and installing carbon filters to screen emissions, Black

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said. "Many parts of the (compliance) plan are already in place," he added.

Those measures have apparently been ineffective, according to Escalante and some neighboring residents.

"I feel the odors have gotten worse," Escalante said.

IEPA ATTORNEY Robert Sharpe said the agency felt a "more comprehensive tool" to control odors was necessary.

"There was a series of complaints in two separate weeks, of the problem being as bad as it's ever been and some said worse,"

Sharpe said.

The incinerator was thought to be the main source of odors, according to Mathur. Cargill has been denied an operating permit because that incinerator "may emit particulate matter and carbon monoxide in excess" of allowed levels, according to the IEPA.

"It's now become evident we can't pinpoint one particular source of the problem," he said. That incinerator, which contains water contaminated with dissolved chemicals from the manufacturing process, was shut down by Cargill on April 7.