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UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 6
1201 ELM STREET, SUITE 500
DALLAS, TEXAS 75270

Office of the Regional Administrator

August 18, 2020

Dr. Chuck Carr Brown, Secretary
Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality
Post Office Box 4314
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70821-4314

RE: Completion of Ambient Air Monitoring in the Neighborhoods Surrounding the Denka Performance Elastomer Facility in LaPlace, LA

Dear Dr. Brown:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) thanks you and your staff for your leadership during our ambient air monitoring program in the neighborhoods surrounding the Denka Performance Elastomer facility (Denka) in LaPlace, LA over the past four years (2016-2020). During this time, Denka has installed pollution controls to reduce emissions required by the state and as your Agency noted last May, the plant has seen an 85% reduction in chloroprene emissions.

From 2016 to 2020, EPA collected over 2,500 samples to monitor the concentrations of chloroprene in the ambient air. EPA's air monitoring data from the Community Air Monitoring Program, implemented in LaPlace since 2016, shows the annual average ambient air concentrations of chloroprene near the Denka facility in 2019 (after Denka's implementation of chloroprene emission control measures) was 0.5-2.3 μg/m3, depending upon the location of the monitor. This annual average would be lower but for occasional elevated concentrations that contribute to the average.

As such, EPA recently began a Continuous Air Monitoring Program (March 2020) to measure short-term concentrations of chloroprene and identify possible unaccounted for sources within the facility. We anticipate completing the Initial Phase of this program by September 1, 2020. The Initial Phase includes instrumentation quality checks, collection and processing of data to assess the sampling equipment performance, and development of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) trigger concentrations and averaging periods for canister samples at each of the six locations. The Operational Phase for the program will begin with completion of the Initial Phase and, barring unforeseen circumstances, will operate until December 2020. Chloroprene data from the program will be posted publicly at: https://www.epa.gov/la/denka-air-monitoring-data-summary.

We were delayed in completing the Initial Phase of the Continuous Air Monitoring Program due to instrument performance issues and modifications to the canister triggering methodology. Because of this delay, EPA extended the community ambient air monitoring work from the end of June 2020 and plans to remove the community air monitoring network at the end of September 2020. Chloroprene data through July 16 has been posted to the public website. Additional chloroprene data will be posted as soon as it is available. Additionally, the EPA is preparing an initial summary report highlighting the activities and results associated with the community ambient air monitoring program from 2016 to July 2020.

We appreciate your continued leadership in helping to reduce chloroprene emissions in LaPlace and look forward to continuing working with you. Thank you for your continued work in promoting a healthy and safe environment in the LaPlace community and in the State of Louisiana.

Sincerely,

Ken McQueen
Regional Administrator