# SHELBY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
Shelby County Health Department

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## STATEMENT REGARDING ETHYLENE OXIDE POLLUTION IN SOUTH MEMPHIS

SHELBY COUNTY, TN – Shelby County Health Department (SCHD) is working closely with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Tennessee Department of Health to educate and inform the residents near the Sterilization Services of Tennessee facility located at 2396 Florida Street about ethylene oxide (EtO) health concerns. SCHD derives its legal authority in air pollution matters from Shelby County Government, the State of Tennessee, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

SCHD has the legal authority to enforce existing EPA regulations under the Air Quality Act (1967)/Clean Air Act. Sterilization Services of Tennessee meets the current federal, state, and local legal standards for EtO emissions. The Clean Air Act does not currently allow Sterilization Services of Tennessee to be held to legal standards higher than existing ones. Nevertheless, the EPA is updating Clean Air Act regulations to reduce allowable EtO emissions to better protect communities like South Memphis. As required by law, SCHD will ensure that any revised federal regulations regarding EtO are enforced as quickly as possible in Shelby County.

Input from the public is an important part of the federal rulemaking process. SCHD is working closely with EPA to ensure the concerns of Shelby County residents are taken into consideration in the revised regulations.

To better serve its residents, SCHD is also conducting epidemiological studies to assess the risk EtO poses to the public.

- SCHD has requested a Public Health Assessment (PHA) and a Health Consultation (HC) from the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to identify health risks related the usage of Ethylene Oxide (EtO) and other chemicals in the area surrounding the Sterilization Services facility.

- SCHD has also requested that the Tennessee Department of Health's Cancer Registry conduct a cancer incidence study of the area around the Sterilization Services facility. That study will analyze cancer rates among residents in the affected area compared to those in another part of Shelby County. Once that

study is complete, the results will be released to the public.

- SCHD will convene meetings with residents to ensure they understand any health risks and available health screening and treatment resources.

- On March 8, 2023, SCHD will present an update to the Shelby County Commission on the status of any new EPA regulations and any follow-up actions that may be taken.

"The people of South Memphis face inequitable health, social, and environmental conditions in comparison to many other parts of Shelby County," said Shelby County Health Department Director Dr. Michelle Taylor. "Achieving environmental justice is a part of Shelby County Health Department's mission to promote, protect and improve the health of ALL in Shelby County."

For more information about Shelby County Health Department services, please visit our website: https://www.shelbytnhealth.com/.

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