



Durbin calls for investigation into Trump Administration's delay of notifying Lake County residents about cancer-causing pollution

November 7 2018 12:48 PM

CHICAGO – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) today, in a letter to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), called for an investigation into whether EPA followed proper protocols when critical health information about cancer-causing ethylene oxide (EtO) emissions at Medline Industries, Inc. and Vantage Specialty Chemicals, Inc. was withheld from Lake County, Illinois residents. Last week, the *Chicago Tribune* published a [story](#) that details how the two facilities in Lake County appear to emit cancer-causing emissions, yet the Trump Administration, along with Governor Rauner's Administration, delayed giving this pertinent information to Illinoisans and still have not properly tested air quality in the area.

“After the findings of the 2016 Integrated Risk Information System report that indicated ethylene oxide (EtO) is much more carcinogenic at lower concentrations than previously thought, EPA acknowledged the increased risks but did not inform residents in DuPage and Lake counties of facilities near them that use and emit EtO and how those emission could cause long-term health concerns,” Durbin wrote. “Withholding this vital public health information from the communities with potentially high EtO exposure is unacceptable. The residents need reassurance that the EPA has their best interests in mind and is taking the proper steps to ensure the air they breathe is clean.”

Last week, Durbin, along with Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Rep. Brad Schneider (D-IL-10), [pressed](#) the EPA to perform an in-depth investigation into EtO emissions at Medline Industries, Inc. and Vantage Specialty Chemicals, Inc. In addition, the members urged EPA to publish a timeline for when it will revise the current Clean Air Act (CAA) EtO standards to limit future emission to a level deemed safe by the

2016 Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry and 2014 National Air Toxics Assessment (NATA) reports. These recent reports have shown that the existing standards need to be lowered to protect public health in communities across the county.

Additionally, Durbin, Duckworth, and Rep. Bill Foster (D-IL-11) have [requested](#) the EPA OIG to investigate if EPA complied with all statutory, regulatory, and policy requirements and protocols when it intentionally withheld critical health information from the public about carcinogenic air pollution from the Sterigenics facility in DuPage County, Illinois.

Durbin and Duckworth are set to meet with Andrew Wheeler, EPA Acting Administrator, in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday, November 14.

Full text of the letter is available [here](#) and below:

The Honorable Charles Sheehan

Acting Inspector General

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Acting Inspector General Sheehan,

We/I write to follow up on a request from November 1 and ask the Office of the Inspector General of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to investigate if statutory authority and proper protocols were followed when critical health information about carcinogenic ethylene oxide pollution from two additional facilities—Medline Industries, Inc. in Waukegan and Vantage Specialty Chemicals, Inc. in Gurnee—was intentionally withheld from residents in Lake County, Illinois.

After the findings of the 2016 Integrated Risk Information System report that indicated ethylene oxide (EtO) is much more carcinogenic at lower concentrations than previously thought, EPA acknowledged the increased risks but did not inform residents in DuPage and Lake counties of facilities near them that use and emit EtO and how those emission could cause long-term health concerns. This news is especially concerning as Vantage Specialty Chemicals has not reported its most recent EtO emissions, as it is required to do, and previous reports show that Vantage released more EtO than both Sterigenics and Medline.

Withholding this vital public health information from the communities with potentially high EtO exposure is unacceptable. The residents need reassurance that the EPA has their best interests in mind and is taking the proper steps to ensure the air they breathe is clean.

For this reason, I ask you expand the scope of my previously requested investigation to include the facilities in Lake County. I/We look forward to your prompt response.