



# **Durbin, Duckworth, Foster, Schneider meet with acting EPA administrator, call for action on cancer-causing pollution in Lake and Dupage Counties**

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), along with U.S. Representatives Bill Foster (D-IL-11) and Brad Schneider (D-IL-10), today met with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Acting Administrator Andrew Wheeler to discuss cancer risks caused by ethylene oxide (EtO) emissions at Sterigenics Inc. in DuPage County, Illinois and Medline Industries, Inc., and Vantage Specialty Chemicals, Inc., in Lake County, Illinois. The members urged Acting Administrator Wheeler to take steps to increase air quality monitoring and update air modeling, and they pressed for answers about whether EPA followed proper protocols and requirements when it delayed telling Illinois residents about the dangerous emissions from the facilities. Durbin, Duckworth, and Schneider also plan to introduce a bill that would require the EPA to revise its standards for EtO emissions.

“We made it clear to Acting Administrator Wheeler today that the residents of Lake and DuPage Counties deserve much better from his agency, and that we won’t stand for inaction to protect the public health of Illinoisans,” said Durbin. “It’s past time for the EPA to implement the proper safety mechanisms and air monitoring systems at these three facilities, update its air emissions standards for ethylene oxide, and thoroughly investigate whether it followed the proper protocols and requirements when it chose to withhold public health information about the dangers associated with these emissions from Medline Industries, Vantage Specialty Chemicals, and Sterigenics. Senator Duckworth, along with Representatives Foster, Schneider, and myself, plan to hold the EPA accountable every step of the way.”

“It’s critical the EPA takes action on this public health crisis to reassure families who live near these facilities in DuPage and Lake Counties and are at risk,” said Duckworth.

“That means improving EPA’s safety standards for ethylene oxide and increasing EPA’s oversight of facilities that produce it. It means being more transparent with the general public and immediately providing DuPage County residents with the test results on the new pollution controls at Sterigenics, which are being withheld from the public for no good reason. And it means requiring Medline and Vantage to install similar equipment to ensure they are no longer pumping cancer-causing emissions into their neighboring communities. We emphasized to Acting Administrator Wheeler that we will not stop until the people of Illinois can be certain they are breathing safe, clean air.”

“I would like to thank Acting Administrator Wheeler for taking the time to meet. I look forward to reviewing the data once the Environmental Protection Agency makes it publicly available. It’s clear the people of Willowbrook deserve answers about Sterigenics and the company’s impact on their health, and the timeline of EPA actions. I will continue to work with my colleagues in Congress to ensure that the public is fully informed,” said Foster.

“Every family should have safe breathing air, and I will be working with my colleagues to ensure the EPA implements and enforces high, science-based standards on ethylene oxide to protect our public health. The residents of Waukegan, Gurnee, and Park City also deserve to know their communities are safe. Today, I communicated to Acting Administrator Wheeler that it is critical the EPA embraces transparency by making all test data publicly available and holding a public meeting,” said Schneider.

Recently, the *Chicago Tribune* published two stories that detail how all three facilities appear to emit cancer-causing emissions, yet the Trump Administration, along with Governor Bruce Rauner’s Administration, delayed giving this pertinent information to Illinoisans and still have not properly tested air quality in the area.

Durbin, Duckworth, and Foster have requested the EPA Office of the Inspector General (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 facilities in [DuPage County](#) and [Lake County](#).

In October, Durbin, Duckworth, and Foster sent a [letter](#) to the EPA requesting federal assistance to help community groups in DuPage County understand the magnitude of the public health dangers they are facing, medical monitoring for community members who have been exposed to ethylene oxide, as well as immediate actions to assess and reduce ethylene oxide exposure across the country.

In September, Durbin, Duckworth, and Foster requested [EPA](#) and [Sterigenics](#) begin testing local air quality for harmful ethylene oxide emissions and make their results

available to the general public – and that the company provide personal exposure tests to Willowbrook residents. The EPA notified the Members of Congress on September 27 that it had begun to test air quality from the Sterigenics plant for emissions of ethylene oxide, but still had not conducted ambient air testing for the surrounding area.

Last week, Durbin, Duckworth, and Schneider [requested](#) EPA perform updated and current air sampling and modeling studies to determine the cancer risks in Lake County. The EPA has not conducted air emissions quality tests for these two facilities since the 2016 Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) report and the 2014 National Air Toxics Assessment (NATA), which found that EtO emissions have a 30-fold increase in cancer potency.

Durbin, Duckworth and Schneider have also [pressed](#) the EPA to perform an in-depth investigation into EtO emissions at Medline Industries, Inc. and Vantage Specialty Chemicals, Inc.